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Refugee entrepreneurs: Typologies of emancipation and impact

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Abstract

The economic and social impacts of refugee entrepreneurs on host countries are becoming increasingly significant. Drawing on interviews with 33 Syrian refugee entrepreneurs from different backgrounds in Turkey, we theorise the conditions, mechanisms and outcomes of individual and collective emancipation that refugee entrepreneurs garner. Our qualitative study offers two theoretical contributions to the literature. First, we develop a typology of emancipation (self-made, political, resource-driven and complete emancipation) among refugee entrepreneurs and identify two emancipation mechanisms (i.e. seeking autonomy and crafting/strengthening) that transform the conditions of refugee entrepreneurs. Second, we demonstrate how emancipation fosters individual empowerment, collective success and positive societal impact. We connect these theoretical expansions to suggest evidence-based policy and practice recommendations on integration and support the emancipatory potential of refugee entrepreneurship.

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Introduction

A refugee is an individual who flees war, violence, conflict or persecution and crosses an international border to find safety in another country (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2023). Setting aside the political aspect of refugee categorisation, the 1951 Refugee Convention defines a refugee as 'someone unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion'. According to the UNHCR (2022), over 89 million people worldwide were forcibly displaced, of whom over 27 million were accorded refugee status. International and national efforts and conventions to address the well-being and welfare of refugees have traditionally adopted a dependent and deficit paradigm, assuming that the host country provides for refugees who lack the essential resources and potential to flourish and liberate themselves and others. The deficit and dependent view of refugees, as shared among the general public but also increasingly among politicians and scholars, frames refugees as a burden on the state, entrenching the mis-recognition of their human potential (Maj et al., 2024). Drawing on a field study of Syrian refugee entrepreneurs, we transcend this dominant dependence and deficit paradigm by exploring the emancipatory potential of refugees, revealing how refugees could emancipate themselves and others.

The number of Syrian refugees registered under temporary protection in Turkey was nearly 3,700,000 in 2022, increasing gradually (Refugees Association in Turkey, 2022). As the predominant group among refugees and displaced people in Turkey, Syrian refugee entrepreneurs have established nearly 14,000 companies (Al-Monitor, 2022). Due to the absence of a regular and legal immigration policy by the government and strong support for mass migration by the leading party based on economic and political concerns, the country experienced a significant influx of refugees from Syria. This irregular and unsafe immigration resulted in a negative public perception. The financial and demographic burden of integrating refugees fuelled nationalist fears about the corrosion of secularism and incidents of xenophobic hate and violence (Aldamen, 2023). The perception and response of society against refugee entrepreneurs is biased and marred with colonial and racist histories (Rashid and Cepeda-García, 2021). Societal prejudices about refugee entrepreneurs as a liability and a burden to the economy remain strong internationally, which leads to exclusionary and discriminatory practices (Alkan et al., 2023; Bolzani, 2023). We question these negative presumptions and study the positive contribution that refugee entrepreneurs make to society and the economy. The literature on refugee entrepreneurship predominantly focuses on survival, coping and resilience, for instance, through developing identity work (Alkhaled and Sasaki, 2022), transforming daily routine practices (Hultin et al., 2022) and managing multiple identities through entrepreneurial action, which helps to develop resilience (Shepherd et al., 2020). However, we know little about how entrepreneurs deploy mechanisms to promote emancipation and thriving for themselves and their environments (Trivedi and Petkova, 2021). While existing research focuses on the motivations, barriers and integration processes of refugee entrepreneurship, the emancipatory practices, mechanisms and outcomes of refugee entrepreneurs need further exploration.

Extant studies provide insights into emancipation experienced by different groups of entrepreneurs as resourceful or resource-constrained, non-profit or economically oriented, mainstream or marginal social actors (Zafar and Ometto, 2021). However, we need to learn more about how specific contexts generate different constraints and potentialities for entrepreneurs to liberate themselves and

others (Ruebottom and Toubiana, 2020). Honneth (1996) defined emancipation as a transformative struggle for recognising and realising human potential. We employ an emancipation perspective (Jones and Ram, 2014; Rindova et al., 2009) to show how entrepreneurial activities by refugees can generate positive social, cultural and economic impacts even in an adversarial context. The emancipatory impact could be multi-faceted, including economic, social, political and public opinion change. Specifically, this study addresses the following questions: (a) to what extent and how do refugee entrepreneurs experience emancipation? and (b) how do emancipatory aspirations and outcomes (goals) interplay with entrepreneurial resources and contexts? Drawing on an empirical study, we examine the entrepreneurial experiences and emancipation processes of Syrian refugees by analysing the importance of institutional context in the process of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurial motivations, capital endowments and experiences with institutional support mechanisms can shape refugee's emancipatory actions; despite challenging circumstances, some can thrive and experience emancipation as entrepreneurs. The context in which refugee entrepreneurship unfolds suffers from spatial, temporal, cultural and symbolic shifts, including displacement from one context and settlement into a new one. Place is an essential dimension of the entrepreneurial experience (Ram et al., 2017); in our study, the experiences of Syrian entrepreneurs are rooted in their displacement and becoming grounded due to cultural similarity (resemblance to country of origin) and previous exposure and ties. This dual nature of context is essential to understand and advance theorisation in this domain. Symbolic denigration of their resources through misrecognition in the new context (Maj et al., 2024) and the possibilities of overcoming such hurdles shape the emancipatory character of Syrian refugees in Turkey.

Based on interviews with 33 refugee entrepreneurs, our qualitative study makes two critical theoretical contributions to the refugee entrepreneurship and emancipation literature. First, we contribute by developing a typology of emancipation – self-made, political, resource-driven and complete emancipation – demonstrating how refugee entrepreneurs experience and foster varied forms of emancipation. In so doing, we address the call highlighted by Abebe (2023) for a more comprehensive theoretical exploration of the emancipatory potential of refugee entrepreneurs. Besides these forms, we identify two primary mechanisms of emancipation: seeking autonomy and crafting and strengthening entrepreneurial capacity, which require a combination of unique contextual (such as temporal stability, shared interests and geographical location) and individual conditions (including capital endowments and social or business support). These forms and mechanisms enhance and expand the theorisation of entrepreneurial emancipation in its unique context.

Second, our theoretical framing draws on emancipation theory to explore how Syrian refugee entrepreneurs in Turkey transform their circumstances, moving beyond survival towards individual and collective empowerment. Thus, we theoretically expand the consequences of refugee entrepreneurship from coping to thriving and making a social impact; this requires more attention in the literature (Beckers and Blumberg, 2013; Dabic et al., 2020; Rath and Kloosterman, 2000). Entrepreneuring as emancipation provides valuable insights for understanding thriving as an outcome, moving beyond the traditional focus on coping mechanisms (Alkhaled and Sasaki, 2022; De Clercq and Honig, 2011; Hultin et al., 2022; Shepherd et al., 2020). As conceptualised by those such as Honneth (1996) and Rindova et al. (2009), the emancipation theory views entrepreneurship as a vehicle for liberation from structural constraints, enabling individuals to reshape their social conditions and gain societal recognition.

Traditional perspectives on emancipation often highlight individual agency's role in overcoming oppression, focusing on resistance to immediate constraints or obstacles. Our findings extend these views by showing that, for refugee entrepreneurs, emancipation entails more than just resistance or individual liberation; it involves adaptive mechanisms and contributions that drive broader societal impacts even in hostile environments. The study identifies specific types of emancipation

among refugee entrepreneurs – self-made, political, resource-driven and complete – each shaped by individual capital endowments and the supportive or unsupportive nature of the context. Unlike classical emancipation theory, which often frames emancipation as a binary opposition between oppression and freedom, our findings illustrate a gradient of emancipatory experiences. For example, the 'resource-driven' emancipation experienced by those with capital, but limited social networks, demonstrates that emancipation is not merely the result of direct opposition to structural constraints. Instead, it is also a creative process of crafting networks and bricolaging resources, often without altering the overarching institutional structures.

Furthermore, this study highlights that emancipation for refugee entrepreneurs is not solely about individual agency but also about creating shared platforms that encourage collective action and social solidarity among refugees. This collective aspect, where entrepreneurs establish business networks, advocacy groups and mutual support systems, diverges from the more individualistic narratives traditionally associated with emancipation theory. By capturing these collective and contextually adaptive forms of agency, the study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of emancipation, emphasising the diversity of paths towards empowerment and the varied conditions under which entrepreneurship can drive socio-economic transformation. This expanded view not only aligns with but also enriches emancipation theory by highlighting the context-specific nature of agency and the vital role of community dynamics in achieving both individual and collective liberation (Harb et al., 2019; Heilbrunn, 2019; Kadkoy, 2020; Lyon et al., 2007). Drawing on these theoretical extensions, we highlight the existing policy gap that overlooks the emancipatory potential of refugee entrepreneurs and address this by providing targeted policy insights and recommendations for major international institutions.

Within our article, first, we introduce refugee entrepreneurship and explore its individual and collective impact, delving into how emancipation is relevant to refugee entrepreneurship and discussing the extent to which conditions of context and resources matter for the emancipatory potential of refugee entrepreneurs. Second, we present the field study in the method section, explaining the data collection and analysis techniques followed by the findings section in which we present emancipation as self-made, political, resource-driven, and complete emancipation and identify two emancipation mechanisms that foster individual empowerment, collective success and broader societal impact. Third, the discussion section introduces our comprehensive typology of emancipatory entrepreneurship among refugees. Finally, we conclude by explaining our theoretical expansion and offering evidence-based policy and practice recommendations on integrating and supporting refugee entrepreneurship's emancipatory potential and capacity.

Refugee entrepreneurs and emancipation

Refugee entrepreneurship presents distinct challenges compared to immigrant and transnational entrepreneurship, mainly due to the particular feelings and circumstances associated with the forced displacement and complex legal hurdles refugees face in host countries (Betts et al., 2017; Bizri, 2017). These challenges are often associated with adverse and negative experiences (Mitra, 2019). The extant arguments predominantly examine the contextual factors influencing refugee entrepreneurship. While some countries foster supportive environments – offering educational programmes that provide language and entrepreneurship training (Birdthistle et al., 2019), as well as financial support in the form of seed capital (Zalkat et al., 2024) – others impose significant barriers (Heilbrunn, 2019). This illustrates the considerable variations in national contexts that shape refugee entrepreneurship. Harima (2022) argues that forced displacement fundamentally alters the connections of refugees, necessitating a more nuanced understanding of how they mobilise resources for entrepreneurial development at both individual and collective levels.

In terms of the entrepreneurial motivations of refugees, the importance of human and cultural capital – including educational qualifications, prior entrepreneurial experience (Alrawadieh et al., 2019) and social networks is noted (Bizri, 2017; Wauters and Lambrecht, 2006) – in facilitating entrepreneurial initiatives. For instance, Klaesson and Öner (2020) demonstrate that social capital is crucial for helping refugees access influential networks within their host countries. It is noted that refugees often liberate themselves from institutional constraints and navigate their transitional state between home and host countries by developing diverse identities (Alkhaled and Sasaki, 2022). They engage in dynamic identity work, reconfiguring their current and future identities to enhance their well-being and socio-economic status (Adeeko and Treanor, 2022). This process enables them to escape stigmatisation and manage their entrepreneurial efforts effectively. Similarly, Christensen and Newman (2024) identify two identity management strategies employed by refugees: distancing from their home identity or reinforcing it, depending on their prioritisation of cultural identity.

Lyon et al. (2007) examine the local impact of refugee entrepreneurship and find that these businesses generate a 'positive multiplier effect' on the local economy. Heilbrunn (2019) highlights that refugees in highly adverse conditions create social spaces and innovative solutions by bricolaging available resources to escape their circumstances. Harb et al. (2019) illustrate the positive economic dynamics generated by Syrian refugee entrepreneurs in Lebanon, noting that Lebanese individuals often benefit from partnerships with such businesses. Similarly, Kadkoy (2020) evaluates the economic and social impacts of Syrian businesses in Turkey, particularly regarding job creation for fellow Syrians. Conversely, Refai et al. (2024) identify that less-equipped, vulnerable Syrian refugee entrepreneurs in the United Kingdom experience liminal integration, which results in social exclusion despite their entrepreneurial efforts. While these studies highlight significant social impacts, there is a notable lack of research theorising the refugee entrepreneurship process, particularly in examining the interplay of agency and boundary conditions (Lång et al., 2024). The refugee entrepreneurship landscape is highly context-dependent (Heilbrunn, 2019), indicating the need for a more nuanced understanding of these dynamics. In this regard, emancipation offers a valuable theoretical framework for comprehending the collective and contextually adaptive forms of agency and the socio-economic impacts of refugee entrepreneurship.

Emancipation is the pursuit of transforming social conditions that deny individuals and groups the recognition they need to fully develop their identities and realise their human potential and capabilities (Honneth, 1996); it is a personal and collective process to achieve justice and social solidarity. The emancipatory view of entrepreneurship questions 'what else entrepreneurship might be and do. . . beyond the promoted desirable economic activity' (Calas et al., 2009, p. 552) and draws attention to the entrepreneurship process as a social change. Unlike social entrepreneurship, which focuses on addressing particular societal and environmental challenges, emancipation is liberation from perceived constraints (Rindova et al., 2009) and transforming the context for others. This emancipation process also includes reconfiguring established arrangements and relationships (authoring) and publicly declaring the intention to change (Rindova et al., 2009, p. 479). Scholars suggest that emancipation is beyond overcoming oppressive social structures and could include the removal of constraints and elevating the agentic human potential (Rindova et al., 2009; Zafar and Ometto, 2021). In this regard, the economic and social potential and impact of refugee entrepreneurs remain under-researched (Harb et al., 2019; Heilbrunn, 2019; Kadkoy, 2020; Lyon et al., 2007).

Previous studies have emphasised different aspects of emancipation, such as the forms, processes, outcomes and conditions (Chandra, 2017; Laine and Kibler, 2022; Martinez Dy et al., 2018; Ruebottom and Toubiana, 2020). Such conditions could be specific to entrepreneurial experiences in a particular spatio-temporal context; the emancipation lens helps us unpack such agency.

Rindova et al. (2009) put forward emancipatory entrepreneurship as the study of 'understanding the factors that cause individuals to seek to disrupt the status quo and change their position in the social order in which they are embedded and, on occasion, the social order itself' (p. 478) and therefore, affecting social change (Champenois et al., 2020, p. 478). Regarding refugee entrepreneurs, the emancipatory nature of entrepreneurship has differing aspects with the potential to limit constraints, including financial hardship (*economic emancipation*), dictated, structured systems (*structural emancipation*), freeing from rigid working conditions such as longer working hours and working for others (*behavioural emancipation*) (Jennings et al., 2016; Zafar and Ometto, 2021). Additionally, emancipation takes the form of freeing themselves from devaluing identity, establishing self-esteem (*cognitive emancipation*) and also regulating negative emotions such as shame (*emotional emancipation*) (Ruebottom and Toubiana, 2020). These different forms of emancipation are crucial for understanding the entrepreneurial agency of refugees.

These emancipation types and processes, including those of refugee entrepreneurs, are also contingent upon the interplay of context and actors (Calas et al., 2009; Jennings et al., 2016). For instance, those actors who experience financial hardship and pursue economic emancipation or emancipation from existing stereotypes seek autonomy rather than reinforcing social collectives (Zafar and Ometto, 2021). Therefore, their agency functions differently, which leads to different outcomes. The strength of emancipation as a theoretical lens lies in its potential to understand the agency of refugee entrepreneurs in enacting social change while pursuing economic outcomes. Our study explores entrepreneurial emancipation beyond refugee entrepreneurs freeing themselves from financial constraints. We scrutinise their empowerment capacity to unleash their potential as social change agents by seeking to change the social order or institutional arrangements that create unequal conditions for similar underserved individuals and the community.

Methods

Research context

Due to the civil war in Syria in 2011, many Syrians had to leave their country and migrate to neighbouring countries. The open-door policy of the Turkish government led to an influx of registered and non-registered Syrian refugees and asylum seekers (Akar and Erdoğdu, 2019). The report by the Refugees Association in Turkey (2022) shows that the number of Syrian refugees stands at 3,719,648 individuals located in cities. However, 50,873 individuals still lived in camps as of March 2022; Syrian refugees are mainly in the cities where their foreigner status is relatively more welcome. Istanbul, Gaziantep, Sanliurfa, Hatay, Adana and Mersin are most favoured by Syrian refugees, according to the data provided by the Directorate General of Migration Management (2022). While Turkey initially welcomed the Syrian migrants as temporary guests, national policy and public opinion shifted in 2014 to framing Syrians as 'permanent residents' and 'overstaying guests', respectively (Akar and Erdoğdu, 2019, p. 925). The short-term protection or temporary guest status of refugees eventually became a de facto longer-term integration (Alkan et al., 2023). Coupled with the non-optimal immigration policy, the low level of regulatory protection in work life pushed many Syrian refugees into insecure work with precarious conditions. While many Syrian refugees found jobs in the informal economy in Turkey, some with at least a minimum level of capital established businesses and engaged in entrepreneurial activities; the Al-Monitor (2022) report states that there were more than 14,000 Syrian entrepreneurs in Turkey at the end of 2021. Although Syrian refugee entrepreneurs employ a considerable number of Turkish locals, populist media often condemn them for seizing market opportunities and jobs, pushing out local workers and firms. Some shops owned by Syrian refugee entrepreneurs have been attacked and destroyed by vigilante groups in Ankara,

Istanbul and Sanliurfa (Evrensel, 2021; Hurriyet, 2017). With the help of the populist policies of the leading party, along with nationalist and xenophobic attitudes, many Syrian refugee entrepreneurs are marginalised and exposed to social and economic challenges. Our study shows that their struggle for legitimacy and recognition is well deserved as they contribute positively to transforming their context and the social and economic environment of others.

Data collection

We conducted structured interviews with 33 Syrian refugee entrepreneurs in Turkey to understand their emancipation process. Syrian refugee entrepreneurs can be considered a hard-to-reach group due to their unwillingness to participate in formal research. We approached the participants by using the network relations and the contacts of one of the authors, employed by the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Organisation of Turkey (KOSGEB), to which many refugee entrepreneurs make applications to obtain funding, training and knowledge for their business activities. This author acted as a field worker, conducted interviews with a translator and made observations during her field visits between May and July 2022, which took nearly three months. The field worker-author had previous connections with these entrepreneurs through provided training and consultations. During the interviews, her embeddedness in the field and her philanthropist role in this 'conflict setting' were crucial in building trust and rapport. The interviews were undertaken in Arabic and Turkish and translated into English. A native Turkish, Arabic and English-speaking translator helped us during the data collection and transcription process. The field worker and translator's familiarity with Syrian culture and language skills were critical in accurately capturing the story.

During the interviews, we employed the 'ethical and reciprocal research practices', which have particular importance for vulnerable communities, as advised by refugee scholars (Pittaway et al., 2010). Accordingly, providing training and consultation through KOSGEB, the institution the field researcher is affiliated with, enables these participants to be more informed about their situations and choices. Employing critical managerial philosophy (Miller and Tsang, 2011) and participatory research, we were aware of the sensitive nature of the liminal conditions they experienced. We adopted an approach to bring value to participants lives by becoming their voices and were meticulous about the potential risks participants may suffer after sharing their stories. We changed their names with pseudonyms in the text and our files to protect anonymity and secure confidentiality.

Our semi-structured interview questions include demographic questions, their migration experiences (e.g. *their personal history of leaving the country*, *whether they came with their family or alone; main challenges*, *experiences with native population*), entrepreneurial experiences (*main motivations*, *the process of entrepreneurship*, *perception of risk*, *their previous entrepreneurial experience*, *social networks*, *governmental supports*, *their intention and potential for changing the field*s). The interviews took place either face-to-face or over the phone. The interview durations varied among the participants, which ranged from 44 to 77 minutes, with an average of approximately 60 minutes. The interview durations included time for translating questions into the participant's spoken languages. Sixteen of the 33 participants declined to be recorded, so we took hand notes during their interviews. The other interviews were recorded with the consent of the participants and transcribed verbatim. We compiled around three A4 pages of notes per interview in the non-recorded sessions. Altogether, we collected and transcribed nearly 250 pages of documentation, of which around 180 pages were effectively used for data structuring and findings. The participant's demographic data and entrepreneurial experiences are available in Table 1.

Additionally, we reviewed approximately 200 pages of documents, including those of non-governmental organisations (UNCHCR), academic studies, reports and theses written about Syrian

Table 1. Descriptive analysis of entrepreneurship as emancipation among participants.

		Refugee entrepreneur profiles				Entrepreneurship as emancipation				Experience in the institutional context			
Groups	Participant (*N*)	Turkish citizen	Gender	Education	Job in Syria or occupation	Motivation	Entrepreneurship impetus (emancipation from)	Scale and scope of entrepreneurial activities in Turkey	Capital	Business and social networks in Turkey	Government supports	City	Supportive vs. unsupportive
1 Most oppressed	Badriya (7)	No	F	University	Teacher	First-time entrepreneur: From employee to entrepreneur	Unemployment, no job in her proficiency	Ready garment industry, online selling	Low	No	No	Gaziantep	Unsupportive
	Labeed (24)	N/A	F	University	Teacher (computer)		Financial restrictions, discrimination in payments, intense workloads	E-commerce business on design		No	No	Istanbul	
	Parvis (26)	N/A	M	University	Working in the grocery business	Entrepreneur in Syria, expanding the same entrepreneurial initiatives in Turkey	Financial restrictions	Grocery business		No, affiliated with Syrian entrepreneurs	No	Kilis	
	Ubad (9)	N/A	M	Secondary school	Metal industry, machinist		Rigid working conditions, entrepreneurial attitude, family business	Machinist		No	No	Gaziantep	
	Yaasin (11)	No	M	Secondary school	Bakery		Rigid working conditions, entrepreneurial attitude	Bakery		No**	No		
	Vahar (13)	N/A	M	High school	Injection plastics		Rigid working conditions, entrepreneurial attitude	Injection plastics (export-oriented)		N/A	N/A	Gaziantep	
	Adwit (22)	No	M	Secondary school	Machinist		Financial restrictions, entrepreneurial attitude	Machinist		No	No	Gaziantep	
	Buhair (31)	No	M	Secondary School	Curtain manufacturer		Entrepreneurial attitude	Curtain manufacturer		N/A**	No	Istanbul	
	Maajy (34)	N/A	M	Computer engineer	Coffee export		Maintaining family business	Coffee export		No**	No	Kilis	
	Raad (32)	No	M	Primary school	Taxi business	Launching from a different industry	Rigid working conditions, entrepreneurial attitude	Retail and grocery business		No	No (only from Kızılay)	Kilis	
2 Undervalued	Laban (21)	No	M	Secondary school	Bakery	Entrepreneur in Syria, expanding the same entrepreneurial initiatives in Turkey	Rigid working conditions, entrepreneurial attitude	Machinist	High	N/A	No	Urfa	Unsupportive
	Abraham(33)	N/A	M	High school	Manufacturing machine, assembly, imp. and exp.		Maintaining family business	Manufacturing machine, assembly, imp. and exp.		No**	No* (no need)	Kilis	
	Zaden (12)	No	M	Secondary school	Textile		Entrepreneurial attitude	Textile		No	No* (no need)	Istanbul	
	Rezzan (28)	No	M	University	Computer engineer working in the textile and automation		Entrepreneurial attitude	Textile		No	No* (no need)	Istanbul	
	Ibad (17)	N/A	M	Secondary school	Textile		Maintaining family business	Textile		No	No* (no need)	Istanbul	
	Faaiq (8)	Yes	M	University	Doctor in the medical equipment industry		Maintaining family business	In the medical equipment industry, laser cut		No	Yes	Gaziantep	
	Bachir (27)	No	M	High school	Machine assembler		Entrepreneurial attitude	Machine assembly		No	Yes	Gaziantep	
	Fahaz (30)	No	M	Secondary school	Working in the textile industry		Salary discrimination	Textile industry		No	No* (no need)	Istanbul	

(Continued)

Table 1. (Continued)

		Refugee entrepreneur profiles				Entrepreneurship as emancipation				Experience in the institutional context			
Groups	Participant (*N*)	Turkish citizen	Gender	Education	Job in Syria or occupation	Motivation	Entrepreneurship impetus (emancipation from)	Scale and scope of entrepreneurial activities in Turkey	Capital	Business and social networks in Turkey	Government supports	City	Supportive vs. unsupportive
3 Climber	Ehab (14)	Yes	M	Secondary school	Food products imp. and exp.	Entrepreneur in Syria, expanding the same entrepreneurial initiatives in Turkey	Maintaining family business	Food products imp. and exp.	High	Yes, strong	N/A	N/A	Supportive
	Baar (16)	N/A	M	Secondary school	Textile		Maintaining family business	Textile		Yes, strong	No* (no need)	Istanbul	
	Aaban (2)	Yes	M	Secondary school	Super laser and steel plate work		Maintaining family business	Super laser, steel plate work		Yes, strong	Yes	Gaziantep	
	Abdul (3)	No (UK citizen)	M	University	Exporter of dried nuts and fruits		Maintaining family business	Exporter of dried nuts and fruits.		Yes, strong	Yes	Mersin	
	Zahri (20)	N/A	M	High school	Chemical products		Entrepreneurial attitude	Chemical products, painting and glue		Yes	Yes	Mersin	
	Calah (23)	Yes	F	University	Pharmaceutical industry		Maintaining family business	Pharmaceutical industry		Yes, strong	Yes	Mersin	
	Birrah (29)	No	M	Primary school	Slipper and shoe manufacturing		Entrepreneurial attitude	Slipper and shoe manufacturing		Yes	Yes	Gaziantep	
4 Politically and socially savvy	Saabira (25)	Yes	F	Master's degree	Primary school teacher	First-time entrepreneur: From employee to entrepreneur	Financial restrictions, no job in her proficiency	Cosmetic business, care products	Low	No (but there is her husband's network)	No	Istanbul	Supportive
	Taabid (1)	No	M	University	Machinist		Financial restrictions, salary discrimination	Machinist		No	Yes	Gaziantep	
	Adnane (6)	N/A	M	University	Worker		Unemployment, no job in his proficiency	Medical mould design industry		No		Gaziantep	
	Lubabe (18)	Yes	M	University	Software developer		Unemployment, no job in his proficiency	Software developer		No		Gaziantep	
	Kadya (19)	N/A	F	University	Computer engineer		Rigid working conditions	Wooden toys and home accessories		No		Gaziantep	
	Adel (5)	No	M	Secondary School	Medical rope and textile industry	Launching from a different industry	Emancipation from unemployment, no job in his proficiency	Second-hand furniture-business		Yes	Yes	Gaziantep	
	Tahseen (35)	N/A	M	High School	Confectioner	Entrepreneurs in Syria expanding the same entrepreneurial initiatives	Entrepreneurial attitude	Confectioner		No, but trying to be organised in defending refugee rights	No	Kilis	
	Manel (36)	No	F	University	Teacher (French)	First-time entrepreneur	Emancipation from rigid working conditions, entrepreneurial attitude	E-business (textile, cosmetics export)		No**	No (but her husband received a grant)	Gaziantep	

We used pseudonyms to protect the anonymity of our participants.

refugees (Pehlivan & Eker, 2024) in Turkey. These documents helped us better understand the structural conditions and public discourses pertinent to Syrian refugees.

Data analysis approach

In the study, the data analysis process integrated interview and documentary data through an abductive approach (Erbil et al., 2024). By employing an abductive research approach (Baykut et al., 2021; Ozbilgin et al., 2022), we moved between the data and literature to make sense of the themes and patterns identified in the data collected. Namely, this approach involved continuously moving between the collected data and relevant literature to identify and interpret themes related to refugee entrepreneur emancipation experiences. Key themes and patterns from the interview data were triangulated with documentary sources – such as NGO reports, academic studies and governmental data – focusing on the conditions and public discourses affecting Syrian refugees in Turkey. Following Prior's (2008) approach to document analysis, we treated these documents not simply as supplementary background but as meaningful artefacts that provided contextual insights into the socio-political landscape shaping refugee entrepreneurship in Turkey. Documentary sources were instrumental in contextualising the structural and socio-political challenges experienced by refugees, enriching the understanding derived from interviews (Prior, 2008). This analysis allowed us to triangulate our interview data by corroborating themes related to institutional barriers, resource constraints and public perceptions, ensuring a richer, multi-layered understanding of the findings. Furthermore, the triangulation enabled us to validate and substantiate findings on the various forms of emancipation and the distinct emancipation mechanisms employed by the participants, contributing to formulating a typology of emancipation experiences for refugee entrepreneurs.

Table 2 outlines the levels of data analysis using the abductive approach. We commenced by identifying the challenges experienced by participants based on their experiences, pointing to multilevel influences on the emancipation process. As to our abductive approach, we scrutinised the migration and entrepreneurial experiences of participants by reviewing our data in depth and revisiting emancipation literature concurrently. Building on the potential themes identified in the previous stage, we created data categories about the emancipation experiences of refugee entrepreneurs and contextual conditions. Then, we returned to the literature to identify the uniqueness of our data regarding the existing theory. The abduction process helped us theorise and articulate the typology we have developed. For instance, in the emancipation theory, we related to the concept of 'authoring', which refers to 'activities with entrepreneuring process through which entrepreneurs engage economic and social resources in a manner that enables them to preserve, institutionalise and expand social base of entrepreneuring process' put forwarded by Rindova (2009, p. 484). Expanding the concept of authoring, in our study, we have identified that our participant refugee entrepreneurs are engaged in a more holistic and engaged process of what we call 'crafting entrepreneurial narrative and practice' by relying on their self-efficacy attributes such as their human capital, hard-working, educational background and by bricolaging the resources, engage with the relational practices with their efforts such as forming shared platforms entrepreneurship groups.

We used the term 'crafting' instead of 'authoring' as some of these entrepreneurs began from scratch and, mainly because they had no other options, they engaged in entrepreneurial processes creatively and proactively to build new resource configurations and relationships. In addition, we also created a data label as 'strengthening entrepreneurial capacity' to demonstrate practices revolving around amplifying their relative social and business positions, drawing on self-efficacy through family heritage and entrepreneurial experience and reconfiguring the social and business arrangements by utilising previous network, support structures and making declarations to enhance economic and social conditions in the host and home countries. Our data structure reflects these

Table 2. Levels of abductive data analysis.

Process of analysis	Level of analysis	Description
Familiarisation and gaining insights	Line-by-line reading of transcripts and relevant documents and analysis of NGO reports and the Turkish Government data	We read the interview transcripts carefully to understand refugee entrepreneur emancipation conditions (Lindlof and Taylor, 2017) and contexts through individual stories. We also analysed NGO reports or government data on Syrian refugee conditions in Turkey, UNHCR reports and Turkish Directorate General of Migration Management data.
Sense-making	Diagnosing the story	We have outlined vital activities, experiences and views surrounding the refugee entrepreneur's journey in Turkey and identified several broad categories and themes related to emancipation forms and mechanisms. We utilised the International Crisis Group insights and academic studies on integration.
Categorisation, association and pattern recognition	Developing within-case analysis and cross-case analysis	We have identified similarities and differences in the emancipation forms and mechanisms and seen how these subsets of experiences relate to each other in terms of shared dimensions and experiences. We have identified four forms of emancipation alongside underpinning mechanisms.
Coding	Creating labels	We have created labels and descriptions indicating the key themes that emanate from our data about experiences and contextual conditions using refugee reports and individual statements in interview transcripts (see Table 3 for data structure).
Checks and extension	Elaboration and extension of themes	We have returned to the literature to identify the uniqueness of our data concerning the existing theory. This phase has led to the development and articulation of our typology.
Interpretation and representation	Writing up	We have created small summaries, cross-checked the findings with all reports and supported these with our field notes. We explored the alignment between themes found in Turkish media discourses on refugees and interview findings on integration.
Explanation and abstraction	Theorising	We have amplified the potential of the research in terms of bringing new insights, theoretical extensions and possibilities through a typology of the emancipation of refugee entrepreneurs by considering unique individual experiences (see Table 2 for typology). We unpacked the coping and thriving mechanisms of emancipation by creating aggregate themes leading to a typology. We iteratively moved from data to theory to understand the relationship between the categories and underlying contextual conditions (Golden-Biddle and Locke, 2007).

Source: Adapted from Boyatzis (1998), Leitch et al. (2013) and Yamak et al. (2016).
UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Table 3. Data structure.

Aggregated theme	First-order categories	Second-order categories	Description
Forms of emancipation	Self-made emancipation	Most oppressed	Refugee entrepreneurs with limited resources and no social support, achieving survival through small-scale businesses.
	Political emancipation	Politically and socially savvy	Entrepreneurs with limited resources but support networks, leveraging governmental or social support for stability.
	Resource-driven emancipation	Undervalued	Refugees with financial capital but lacking networks, using personal resources to establish businesses.
	Complete emancipation	Climbers	Well-resourced entrepreneurs with solid networks, overcoming constraints to expand and positively impact society.
Mechanisms of emancipation	Seeking autonomy	Breaking free from constraints	Initiating entrepreneurship to gain autonomy from economic or social limitations, like salary discrimination.
	Crafting/ strengthening capacity	Developing entrepreneurial skills	Adapting through skills, networking and bricolage to sustain and expand business under challenging conditions.
Contextual influences	Time	Temporal dimension	The sense of security refugees feel under current political structures, with uncertainty about future policies.
	Shared interests	Collaboration between the government and refugees	Government policies and refugee needs align to foster socio-economic integration under current political dynamics.
	Place	Geographic and cultural integration	The role of geographical and cultural proximity in refugee adaptation, despite societal discrimination or nationalism.

labels as ‘emancipation mechanisms’, influenced by ‘emancipatory conditions’ and context (as identified through time, space and shared interest as explained above), as depicted in Table 3.

We regularly met during the research process and engaged in discussions of the coding themes and revisiting theory to achieve consensus in the interpretation of the data. As we required further data and insights to clarify ambiguities or disagreements, we rechecked the emerging themes with a co-author, a field researcher and several research participants. This process allowed us to substantiate our interpretations and establish trustworthiness (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Based on the data we structure and the results of our analyses, we create the typology, where refugee entrepreneurs were clustered around four types of emancipation that they experienced and underpinning emancipation mechanisms alongside outcomes in the following section. This typology forms the backbone of our theorising in this study.

Findings

This study provides insights into two aspects: first, a typology of forms of entrepreneurial emancipation, and second, the mechanisms and outcomes of emancipation among refugees.

A typology of emancipation

We have identified four forms of emancipation: self-made emancipation, political emancipation, resource-driven emancipation and complete emancipation. This typology's formulation frames the interplay of emancipation mechanisms and outcomes alongside contextual and individual boundary conditions.

Self-made emancipation. We grouped entrepreneurs with limited resources operating in an unsupportive environment as 'the most oppressed' and found that they experienced 'self-made emancipation'. Of 33 from the lower socio-economic profile, 12 entrepreneurs lacked personal belongings and social and institutional support. Since these entrepreneurs declared they were stigmatised, we grouped them as the 'most oppressed' group. It emerged that 4 (from 12 in this group) were first-time entrepreneurs. Working as employees or students in Syria, these first-time entrepreneurs stressed they created their venture with no financial resources or entrepreneurial experience. As such, they needed more resources and social and business networks in the Turkish context and yet had to receive any governmental support. Self-emancipation is closely associated with the entrepreneur emancipation process through their limited capital and endeavours. Developing self-efficacy, resource bricolage, and cultural and relational boundary practices becomes a matter of survival for self-emancipation. In particular, relational practices such as creating new relations with locals and other Syrian groups have become more important for entrepreneurs achieving self-emancipation and enhancing entrepreneurial self-efficacy. First-time refugee entrepreneurs achieve self-emancipation through small-scale, available and achievable jobs.

Political emancipation. We grouped those with limited personal resources, but with governmental support at the initial phase of launching a business or a social/business network, as 'politically and socially savvy' and classified their experience as 'political emancipation'. Specifically, eight entrepreneurs with limited capital have prior entrepreneurial experience in Syria. Except for one individual, they all continued their previous venturing in Turkey. Some have benefited from established social networks and governmental support (seven), placing them in a less precarious position than the previous group. Governmental incentives or local support helped these entrepreneurs mitigate the challenges of displacement and enhanced entrepreneurial self-efficacy. Compared to the self-emancipation process, the political emancipation process provided entrepreneurs with a relatively less oppressive institutional environment due to the political or social support they received and their entrepreneurial mindset and skill set. These experienced entrepreneurs were most likely to maintain their entrepreneurial initiatives in Turkey.

Resource-driven emancipation. Refugee entrepreneurs in the 'undervalued' group, who were resourceful but operating in an unsupportive environment, experienced 'resource-driven emancipation'. Approximately seven entrepreneurs declared they had advantageous financial resources but needed more business, social network or governmental support to launch their ventures. We refer to them as 'undervalued' as their resourcefulness enabled them to address challenges effectively. These entrepreneurs addressed challenges or seized opportunities by leveraging their own or familial resources. Their self-efficacy, driven by capital endowments and an entrepreneurial mindset, is crucial for achieving resource-driven emancipation. Personal or familial capital endowments helped these entrepreneurs deal with significant issues related to displacement and enhanced entrepreneurial self-efficacy. While the resource-driven emancipation process provides opportunities for capital endowments, the main challenges related to the need for social or business networks that

hinder their ability to expand the businesses. These experienced entrepreneurs were most likely to maintain their entrepreneurial initiatives in Turkey.

Complete emancipation. Resourceful entrepreneurs operating in a supportive environment, grouped as 'climbers', are likely to experience 'full emancipation' (Ram et al., 2022). Specifically, some seven individuals had substantial social and political networks. These entrepreneurs declared they were happy with current conditions, although they experienced discrimination. These are classified as 'climbers' as they stated they were happy with their current conditions, which offered many opportunities to launch and grow the businesses. Although these entrepreneurs could not break free from all constraints and discrimination, their capital endowments and previous social and business networks were instrumental in capitalising on such opportunities. The complete emancipation process mainly involves utilising these opportunities to create employment and develop a visionary approach to changing society.

Refugee entrepreneurial emancipation connects to justice, solidarity and societal change. Each form of emancipation – self-made, political, resource-driven and complete – is a pathway that embodies these broader social ideals. Each typology category shows how refugee entrepreneurs leverage limited or ample resources to transcend personal survival and foster wider social impact. For instance, self-made emancipation links to justice by challenging stereotypes and breaking free from dependency narratives, while political emancipation involves building solidarity through networks that support other refugees and advocate for rights. Resource-driven and complete emancipation highlight societal change, where entrepreneurial success not only supports personal growth but also creates employment and bolsters the local economy. This typology illustrates that as refugees navigate diverse structural constraints, their entrepreneurial efforts actively contribute to a more inclusive social landscape, embodying justice and solidarity in their host community.

Emancipation mechanisms and outcomes: from coping to thriving

We identified two primary mechanisms of emancipation among refugee entrepreneurs: seeking autonomy and crafting/strengthening entrepreneurial capacity.

Seeking autonomy. Refugee entrepreneur motivations for launching an entrepreneurial activity differ. Some refugees, particularly well-educated first-time entrepreneurs, are likely to highlight that they cannot find a job in their proficiency and feel that they must earn more to survive. For example, Adnane C., holding a university degree in engineering, worked as an employee in Syria. Still, he needed help finding a job in Turkey at his skill level due to the challenges in diploma equivalence procedures. He states:

> 'Because finding a job as an engineer is difficult, there is nothing to risk'. (Adnane C., politically and socially savvy)

Similarly, Lubabe B., who launched a business as a software programme developer with his wife through his previous social/business network in Syria, explains:

> 'I do not have a certificate in computer programming. It is difficult to find a job in Gaziantep. It is easy to work for ourselves (with my wife). I worked in this sector in Syria with companies from Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Jordan'. (Lubbabe B., politically and socially savvy)

Emancipation from salary discrimination is a strong motivation for some entrepreneurs to launch entrepreneurship. Most (the ones without citizenship) need work permits, work informally and are

underpaid. Fahaz S. does not have citizenship or a work permit and is working as an employee in the textile industry illegally. He decided to launch the textile industry business because of the workplace salary discrimination:

> 'Financially, I am good, so I decided to do my own business. However, I cannot find customers. As soon as I find good customers, I will try to legalise my business. I have been working as an employee on weekdays and working independently with one part-time employee at weekends'. (Fahaz S., undervalued)

Another vital impetus for some of these refugee entrepreneurs with previous entrepreneurial experience is to address one of the shortcomings of the institutional context, such as breaking free from severe working conditions through autonomy achieved by being their boss. Such a behavioural pattern echoes their experience in Syria, where they had independent businesses. The statement of another resourceful entrepreneur, Laban M., exemplifies this:

> 'I had money to set up a business; I was working for myself in Syria. I did not want to work for others here'. (Laban M., undervalued)

Entrepreneurs with high capital endowments come primarily from wealthier families, mainly motivated to maintain the family business and expand previous entrepreneurial initiatives in Turkey. One refugee, from an established family firm, states:

> 'There is a ready-made structure stemming from the family. My big and little brothers also do the same business in Jordan and Syria. My father was an entrepreneur. He was buying from Germany and selling to Syria'. (Ibad A., undervalued)

Furthermore, some participants set objectives, such as breaking free from discrimination through entrepreneurship by gaining recognition and respect in the host society. These refugee entrepreneurs want local people to appreciate their contribution to the host economy. A few of them are mainly motivated to grow their businesses to contribute to economic and socio-cultural re-development and re-building processes in Syria, which we identify as intellectual emancipation:

> 'Our first purpose is the production and launching of new lines (in the pharmaceutical industry) dominated by white-collar employees. We have been working to make Syria a liveable place'. (Calah D., climber)

Crafting and strengthening entrepreneurial capacity. Our findings reveal that Syrian refugees act beyond coping and transform the conditions of refugee entrepreneurs through two thriving mechanisms: *crafting or strengthening entrepreneurial capacity*. These mechanisms enable them to reframe and rise above the constraints, release them for others and achieve a broader impact. Entrepreneurs engage with social, symbolic and material practices to shape their entrepreneurial part, which entails crafting or strengthening entrepreneurial capacity. Entrepreneurs with limited capital endowments ('most oppressed' and 'politically and socially savvy' groups) craft entrepreneurial capacity through developing competency and creating a network to survive in an unfamiliar context. Crafting entrepreneurial capacity is a matter of survival for these groups. Entrepreneurs with high endowments already obtain relevant capital endowments and relevant skill sets to launch a business yet have to strengthen their entrepreneurial capacity to adapt to the host environment's social, cultural and legal requirements.

Crafting and strengthening entrepreneurial capacity process involves seeking opportunities, developing competencies and launching a business. This process includes engagement with developing

self-efficacy, resource bricolage/support, relational practices and cultural integration practices to varying degrees. We observe that how the participant entrepreneurs attribute self-efficacy differs. Entrepreneurs with limited endowments aiming for economic emancipation (most oppressed and politically and socially savvy) will likely attribute self-efficacy to belief, hard work and courage in the entrepreneurial start-up process because they are obliged to elevate their self-efficacy for the survival of their own business. For instance, Badriya A. told us:

> 'I deal [with the challenges] with strong willpower; this is the nature of human being'. (Badriya A., most oppressed)

Strikingly, almost all entrepreneurs from the most oppressed group hold university degrees and have specific technical knowledge or previous job experience. Being a computer teacher, Labeed E. could launch an e-commerce business for which design/computer knowledge was crucial in obtaining technical expertise and adapting to the online selling process. Similarly, politically and socially savvy groups also attribute self-efficacy to hard work. For example, her technical knowledge, drawn from computer engineering proficiency, helped Kadya S. to design wooden toys and home accessories and launch an entrepreneurial career in a completely different industry. She states:

> 'Having less money and not knowing entrepreneurship is the main issue for us. However, we will overcome this over time'. (Kadya S., politically and socially savvy)

For entrepreneurs with high endowments, the most distinguishing aspects of crafting entrepreneurial capacity are the notion that they attribute self-efficacy to entrepreneurial proficiency, accumulated often through family businesses, intellectual heritage stemming from family business and their personal and familial resources. Zaden T., a refugee entrepreneur who maintains his textile business in Turkey, notes:

> 'When I first came here, I worked as an employee, then I realised that I have everything to launch a business'. (Zaden T., undervalued)

In a similar vein, the following quotations from Ibad, Calah and Baar illustrate how intellectual family legacy encouraged these entrepreneurs to maintain the family businesses in the Turkish context:

> 'I launched this business with the support of my brothers. They train me. They do the same work in Egypt and Syria'. (Baar B., climber)

Other strong sub-processes of crafting entrepreneurial capacity for refugees include resource bricolage and support. Entrepreneurs with limited capital use resource bricolage by searching 'whatever is at hand' (Mair and Marti, 2006) to launch a business. They mainly co-partner with acquaintances, borrow money, utilise their savings and sell their belongings. Saabira notes:

> 'I did not get any support. In addition to my savings, I borrowed money from acquaintances to launch a business'. (Saabira D., politically and socially savvy)

Similarly, Buhair, a curtain manufacturer in Syria, co-partnered with two of his acquaintances since he needed more resources to launch a business by himself. He notes:

> 'I am experienced in this work and know the prices; this is my proficiency'. (Buhair B., most oppressed)

Some entrepreneurs are likely to deploy their own and familial resources, declaring that they need financial support. In contrast, others are likely to benefit from the incentives to scale up their businesses. Equally, a crucial requirement for strengthening entrepreneurial capacity is to amplify their relative position in the context. At the core of this lies cultural integration practices, these are particularly relevant for refugees who have to navigate through different economic, political and socio-cultural spheres. In effect, they have to bridge cross-cultural boundaries rather than disrupt them; this informs the integration process; all the participants engaged similarly with such cultural boundary-spanning practices. First, they learn the language for the adaptation process; the majority were self-taught with considerable effort. Second, they attended educational platforms to learn about prevailing regulations, etc., such as legal requirements. For instance, Tahseen R. (politically and socially savvy) shared that he had joined economic associations and social activities to improve his market knowledge to launch his confectionary business in Turkey.

Our data also revealed that refugee entrepreneurs reconfigure social arrangements to alleviate constraints for others and foster social change through entrepreneurship. We have identified several processes where the participants engage in cross-fertilising the cultural, social and symbolic contexts upon which they draw. The two groups of participants with low capital endowments engaged in activities such as learning about entrepreneurship with, and from, other refugee entrepreneurs (peer support), creating and fostering shared platforms for Syrian refugee entrepreneurs to identify challenges and find collective solutions. They also formed associations in supporting refugee rights as activists developing declarations on related economic and social development.

For the other two groups (undervalued and climbers) of refugee entrepreneurs, this reconfiguration process often required them to utilise their social and business networks and political connections. These refugee entrepreneurs transcend social and symbolic boundaries by maintaining their previous social and business networks, building new relations with locals by finding new supporters, suppliers and customers, or building shared platforms for exchanging ideas and finding solutions. This situation connects their experiences with prior business networks established in Turkey while they were still living in Syria. Those business connections not only served the purpose of easing the entrepreneurial process in Turkey but also rendered the refugee entrepreneurs more familiar with the Turkish context informing some astute observations and decisions:

> 'Since I have a history with the firms in Mersin and did business everywhere in Turkey, I have many precious acquaintances in Turkey. I have known these forms for 15-20 years and have worked with some since the 1960s (from my father's business). For example, we buy nuts from Karadeniz, pistachio and spices from Gaziantep, grapes from Izmir, walnuts from Niksar, and apricots from Malatya'.(Abdul H., climbers)

Due to their high socio-economic profiles, entrepreneur success relies heavily on political connections with critical actors. For instance, having closer personal relations with ministries and local mayors helped some participants deal with bureaucratic procedures. Calah D. (climbers), who maintained the pharmaceutical family business in the new context, told us that her family's relations with critical governmental representatives helped her and her family quickly become Turkish citizens.

Our search for entrepreneur patterns and practices during the emancipation process revealed that entrepreneurs with limited capital (the most oppressed and undervalued groups) were more concerned about building shared platforms to defend their rights, learning from each other and becoming more proactive in influencing the system. Entrepreneurs with high endowments and strong social and political ties were likely to emancipate themselves from rigid conditions, create employment and make declarations to improve the system that helps emancipate others.

Context conditioning emancipatory mechanisms and outcomes

We aim to understand how refugee entrepreneurs experience entrepreneurial emancipation and how emancipatory mechanisms differ based on their entrepreneurial resources and experiences of institutional context. Our findings have revealed three distinctive contextual mechanisms for the emancipation process for refugee entrepreneurs: time (the temporal dimension within which refugee entrepreneurs operate in the Turkish context), shared interest (between government and refugees) and place (geographically and socio-culturally as being transition point and regionally some cities providing a conducive environment for refugees). These three dynamics are interconnected and often overlap, shaping the experiences and opportunities available to refugee entrepreneurs in complex ways. Under these three overarching dimensions of context, we find that three dynamics influence how refugee entrepreneurs experience the institutional context (economic, political-structural and socio-cultural context) as supportive or unsupportive.

First, time – the temporal dimension within which refugee entrepreneurs operate in the Turkish context, is critical. The historical context of the Syrian war caused the mass migration to Turkey; Syrian refugees in Turkey feel secure for as long as the current ruling party remains in power. However, refugees often express feelings of instability and uncertainty regarding their future primarily attributed to political instability within the country. For example, it is uncertain what will happen when the European Union ceases to offer financial support to refugees.

Refugee entrepreneurs fear that a change in government could lead to their deportation, forcing them to relocate to other countries. Some participants, who do not have work permits and citizenship, experience considerable uncertainty as their residency is characterised as 'indeterminate', 'transitional' or 'perpetual' based on their situation. In particular, refugees who do not have Turkish citizenship feel they need to embed themselves in the Turkish context. For instance, a woman entrepreneur stated:

> 'I do not feel affiliated to any nation; if I do not get citizenship in a year, I will move into Germany. I feel like I am lost here. I need citizenship to feel that I exist in this society'. (Manel, Z., politically and socially savvy)

Another woman refugee lived in the refugee camp in Gaziantep with her family and stated that she was psychologically damaged from her experiences during her first year in Turkey as living conditions were dire (Badriya A., most oppressed). Those displaced people with citizenship were content with the condition but were intimidated by the racist attitude of the locals; however, they were not planning to return to Syria. However, they experienced oppression in bureaucratic and socio-cultural areas, particularly during the initial phases of the displacement. Another refugee, reflecting Manel Z., commented:

> 'I need citizenship. I may move to Europe, where my brother migrated. He always emphasises much better conditions'. (Fahaz S., undervalued)

Regarding the political and structural aspects of context, our data show that most entrepreneurs found the lack of residence permits, licensing and municipal permits, and citizenship and diploma equivalence procedures as the bureaucratic procedures that hampered their integration process and their entrepreneurial capacity. Ambiguities in these procedures leave them in an indeterminate state. For instance, Rezzan U. launched a textile business exportation in Istanbul based on his experience in textile and entrepreneurship, indicating his indeterminate state:

> 'There is no work permit or citizenship. I have a business here. However, my work permit was declined six times. I escaped from the battle in Syria, but they are asking for lots of documents and seals, which cost me a lot. I cannot use all of my potential here. I can use it up to 60-70% due to these procedures and biases of the people. It is not easy to launch a business, but if there is no improvement or stability, moving to another country such as Germany would be a good option for me'. (Rezzan U., undervalued).

We observed that some entrepreneurs with high capital endowments were likely to launch an informal business and this did not prove problematic for them. For instance, one participant created a business as a machinist in Gaziantep, although she still needs a residence permit. She rationalised the situation:

> 'I had to run away when the police visited the company'. (Laban M., undervalued)

Almost all the participants noted the challenges in the lack of institutional mechanisms for integration, such as language training or their educational qualifications not being officially recognised – as noted by Parvis S.:

> 'I want to continue my education (I graduated from the economy), but I cannot since I do not have an equivalent diploma'. (Parvis S., most oppressed)

These conditions create an unsupportive and unequal environment in this temporality. Similarly, Ibad A. expressed his feelings:

> 'We are anxious if the government changes, and they send us back. That is why we are not likely to put all of our efforts here. Would you want to go to a place where you could have only 1-2 hours of electricity daily? We want to stay here'. (Ibad, A., climber)

Second, our data revealed that the shared interests of the ruling political party and refugees create opportunities for collaboration, networking and mutual support, which can be instrumental in facilitating the emancipation process for refugee entrepreneurs. This alignment of interests is mainly due to the political landscape, whereby the current government seeks the support of Syrian refugees to sustain their power position. During the ruling party's tenure, a significant shared interest existed between the government and Syrian refugees, particularly regarding social welfare benefits such as health insurance. This shared interest created a conducive environment for collaboration and mutual support between the government and refugee entrepreneurs, fostering opportunities for their socio-economic integration and empowerment. However, it is essential to acknowledge that this dynamic is subject to change with shifts in political power or policy priorities. As such, the stability and continuity of these benefits and opportunities for refugee entrepreneurs may fluctuate depending on the prevailing political climate and government agenda. Therefore, while time and shared interests currently present favourable conditions for refugee entrepreneurs, the sustainability of these opportunities remains contingent upon ongoing political dynamics and policy decisions.

Our data revealed that socially or financially advantaged refugee entrepreneurs are likely to perceive opportunities in the business environment. For instance, Vahar, who launched a plastic moulding exportation business with his brother, states:

> 'Opportunities are great, everything is OK in Turkey. I will stay here'. (Vahar, U. (undervalued)

Solid business networks and a collaborative business environment in Turkey are essential aspects of the shared interests. While most refugee entrepreneurs complain about the hardships of the economic environment, which is prevalent in fierce competition, economic instability and expensive taxes, those with high capital endowments and solid business networks stress the collaborative

business environment in Turkey. The critical distinction in the experience of the conditions in terms of the economic climate is the strength of social and business networks, which eases the perception of competition. For instance, Baar B., who is from a wealthy family and in a textile business in Istanbul, maintains a family business through previously established social and trade ties with Turkish suppliers and customers, exemplifies this:

> 'Doing business here is much easier. After we could bring our money, everything is solved. There were drapers in Turkey with whom we had previously done business. Some people do not like us, but you cannot change this'. (Baar B., climber)

Similarly, Manel Z., a first-time woman entrepreneur created a new online business and gained advantages from accessing network connections through her husband:

> '. . . [economically] we can get what we deserve at least. I did not get any support, but my husband got funds from KOSGEB; he has his own business here in assembly machine manufacturing and helped me a lot during this process. It is much better here than in many other countries'. (Manel, Z., politically and socially savvy).

Entrepreneurs with high capital endowments and political connections met bureaucratic procedures to a lesser extent; this was evident in the story of a refugee entrepreneur who immigrated to Turkey with his family before the Syrian war several years ago:

> 'My brother applied for citizenship and residence permit. He could not obtain. Later on, we wrote a letter to TurgutOzal and could get the citizenship and residence permit with his instruction'. (Abdul H., climbers)

Third: place is also a contextual mechanism. Turkey is a hub and passage point for transitioning to a new life with different layers at national and regional levels. At the regional level, some cities offer different opportunities and challenges to refugee entrepreneurs; at the national level, the country presents a space for liberation, establishing a new life and global connections.

Similarly, the geographical location (place) of refugee entrepreneur businesses may affect their access to markets and resources, influencing their ability to capitalise on shared interests and opportunities. Geographic location shapes the socio-cultural dynamics informed by cultural and religious discourses. These conditions provided favourable, yet ambiguous, conditions for refugees.

All participants highlighted the importance of cultural and religious proximity; this was highly instrumental in their decision to go to Turkey. Almost all the participants explained the cultural and religious similarities of the context and highlight that living in Turkey is an opportunity for them as they do not feel like foreigners. In particular, they put forward how 'moral values, customs and traditions' in Turkey resemble Syria (Abdul H., climbers). That is why Syrian refugees want to raise their children in a Muslim country rather than Europe (e.g. Adnane C., politically and socially savvy). However, they are discriminated against in all walks of social life by nationalist people in Turkey and experienced significant challenges, suffering from bigotry and aggressive attitudes. The following statement of a refugee entrepreneur indicates this:

> 'Our reality is not that kind of poverty. We were not different from the people living here. We were threatened like we never met these machines and were all in poverty. . . We came from home to this camp. There is nothing here. There is no washing machine or a place to put on clothes. We stayed in the muddy puddles. I was annoyed with this situation. I was treated like dirt. My psychology was affected badly'. (Badriya A., most oppressed)

One refugee highlighted the language barrier:

> 'People told me that I had to speak Turkish in Turkey while speaking in Arabic or English'. (Naajy U., undervalued)

Another mentioned the challenges regarding extreme nationalism:

> 'It is so challenging to live here because of the nationalist people, who are dangerous. We are all Muslim; there were no borders in the Ottoman period. What has changed so fast?' (Rezzan U., undervalued)

While these three dynamics – time, shared interest and place – operate independently, they are often intertwined and mutually reinforcing. Changes in the political landscape (time) may influence host community and government attitudes and policies, affecting the shared interests and support networks of refugee entrepreneurs.

Under these conditions, there were specific examples of societal impact by refugee entrepreneurs, showing how their ventures foster networks, create employment and contribute to community solidarity. For instance, entrepreneurs experiencing 'resource-driven emancipation' draw on personal or familial capital to establish businesses that, in turn, provide job opportunities for both refugees and local residents, effectively countering narratives that frame refugees as economic burdens. Moreover, those engaged in 'political emancipation' often leverage networks to build collective platforms, supporting other refugees in navigating bureaucratic and social barriers. An example is a Syrian entrepreneur who collaborates with local business associations to foster mutual understanding and provide training for other refugees, which promotes cultural integration and economic inclusion.

In cases of 'complete emancipation', resourceful entrepreneurs with solid social ties actively employ refugees; this strengthens community bonds and signals their commitment to contributing positively to the host society. Through these actions, refugee entrepreneurs not only establish viable businesses but also act as agents of societal change, creating environments of trust, shared purpose and economic stability within their host community. To further support the typology, additional quotes illustrating participant motivations for emancipation were included in an Appendix at the end of the study. In Table 4, we present the typology we developed, explaining the emancipation mechanisms and outcomes for the refugee entrepreneurs.

Our findings provide a groundbreaking view of refugee entrepreneurship by highlighting a novel typology of emancipation – self-made, political, resource-driven and complete – that reflects the diverse experiences of refugees across varying levels of support and resources, from constrained survival to thriving success. It reveals key mechanisms of emancipation, notably the pursuit of autonomy and the crafting of entrepreneurial capacity, where refugees actively reshape their socio-economic realities through resilience, skill adaptation and social network building. Contextual dynamics, such as temporal stability, shared interests between government and refugees, and cultural and geographic proximity, play significant roles, influencing the capacity of refugees to commit to and expand their entrepreneurial ventures despite uncertainties. Enriching the conventional debates that frame refugee entrepreneurship mainly as coping, this research shifts the narrative to thriving, demonstrating how entrepreneurship enables refugees to transcend survival, foster collective success and contribute positively to both their home and host societies. The findings ultimately challenge the deficit model of refugees as dependent on aid, showcasing them instead as active agents of economic and social transformation with the potential for broad, positive impact.

Table 4. A typology of emancipation mechanisms and outcomes.

Emancipation type	Group characteristics	Endowment of capitals	Mechanisms	Scale and scope of entrepreneurial initiatives	Primary outcomes	Contextual conditions	National level policy recommendations
Self-made emancipation	Most oppressed, limited resources, unsupportive context	Low financial and social capital	Resource bricolage, self-efficacy	Small-scale, survival-focused initiatives, often informal	Survival-based entrepreneurship	High structural constraints, no support	Provide basic financial support, offer mentorship and remove administrative barriers to entry.
Political emancipation	Politically and socially savvy, limited resources but government/network support	Low financial capital, moderate social capital	Leverages support for stability	Moderate scale, maintaining previous ventures or social enterprise	Moderate resilience, continuation of prior ventures	Supportive institutions/ social connections	Strengthen integration programmes, ensure equitable access to local markets and provide networking opportunities with local businesses.
Resource-driven emancipation	Undervalued, resourceful, but unsupportive environment	High financial capital, low social capital	Capital endowment, family resources	Moderate to large scale, focus on sustainability and growth within limitations	Limited expansion, sustainable efforts	Requires own capital, lacks social networks	Create incentives for partnerships with local businesses, improve access to business resources and reduce restrictions on capital movement.
Complete emancipation	Climbers, resourceful and in a supportive environment	High financial and social capital	Access to networks and opportunities	Large-scale, formalised businesses with broader societal impact	Thriving, societal impact, job creation	Strong networks, supportive policies	Promote policies that recognise the contributions of refugee businesses, support scaling efforts and encourage civic engagement and social contribution initiatives.

Discussion

In this article, we wanted to understand (a) to what extent and how refugee entrepreneurs experience entrepreneurial emancipation and (b) how emancipatory aspirations and outcomes interplay with entrepreneurial resources and contexts. Our study offers two theoretical extensions to refugee entrepreneurship literature through an emancipation lens borrowed from Honneth (1996). First, we developed a typology of emancipation (self-made, political, resource-driven and complete emancipation) among refugee entrepreneurs and identified two emancipation mechanisms (i.e. seeking autonomy and crafting/strengthening) that transform the conditions of refugee entrepreneurs, all of which underpin their experiences of institutional context and endowment of capital. Individuals with low capital endowments in unsupported environments are the *most oppressed.* Poorly endowed in supportive contexts are called *politically and socially savvy.* Those individuals with high levels of capital endowment in unsupportive contexts are termed the *undervalued.* Finally, those with high endowments of capital in supportive contexts are described as *climbers.* We extended the emancipation process theory by showing how these groups demonstrated varied forms of emancipation. While the most oppressed showed a self-made emancipation model, the politically and socially savvy demonstrated the political emancipation process. The undervalued displayed resource-driven emancipation and the climbers, complete emancipation. In so doing, we address the call highlighted by Abebe (2023) for a more comprehensive theoretical exploration of the emancipatory potential of refugee entrepreneurs. More specifically, our findings on emancipation mechanisms – seeking autonomy and crafting and strengthening entrepreneurial capacity and outcomes – and individual or collective success reveal the extent of resource and context dependency on the emancipation process. Our typology also offers policy recommendations for each category of emancipation, inviting regulators to consider envisioning refugee entrepreneurship policies with these evidence-based insights.

Second, we move away from the traditional focus on coping mechanisms in the extant research (Alkhaled and Sasaki, 2022; De Clercq and Honig, 2011; Hultin et al., 2022; Shepherd et al., 2020), which tends to depict refugees as merely surviving or managing their difficult circumstances. We extend this approach by demonstrating thriving as a direct outcome of the process of emancipation. In this context, Emancipation refers to how refugees freed themselves from constraints and used entrepreneurial activities to improve their lives and positively contribute to their communities. By exploring how this liberation from restrictive conditions leads to individual and collective accomplishments, we demonstrate that emancipation creates a dynamic environment where success is not just about overcoming adversity but also about achieving prosperity and growth. This perspective highlights the transformative potential of refugee entrepreneurship, demonstrating how refugees can achieve significant accomplishments and promote broader social and economic advancements. The emphasis is on the transitory journey from survival to success, highlighting the empowering impact of entrepreneurship and its broader implications for individuals and communities. In so doing, we extend the literature on the economic and, in particular, the social impact of refugee entrepreneurs (Al-Dajani et al., 2015; Harb et al., 2019; Heilbrunn, 2019; Kadkoy, 2020; Lyon et al., 2007).

The thriving mechanisms highlight how emancipation commences with the individual and could galvanise into collective emancipation if empowered by structural conditions within the context. In other words, the thriving outcomes of emancipation demonstrate the significant impact of individual actions and agency of refugee entrepreneurs on the journey towards success. Freire (1996), explains that human beings are uniquely capable of emancipating themselves and others. Emancipatory social engagement may fall into the traps of verbalism or activism whereby verbalism refers to speaking without action, and activism refers to action without reflection. Heeding this cautionary note from Freire (1996), we explore the words, actions and reflections of Syrian refugee

entrepreneurs in Turkey in their efforts to emancipate themselves and their context, ultimately transforming their contexts and conditions. As such, the thriving mechanism and outcomes show that individual emancipation is the first step towards liberation, with each refugee entrepreneur's courage, resilience and innovation catalyst for broader societal change. Bringing agency to the fore of the debate, we significantly contribute to knowledge and advance theory through how this agency manifests via emancipation in the context of refugee entrepreneurship. By doing so, we address the calls for research on the micro-level influences and agency among refugee entrepreneurs (see Abebe, 2023).

Individual agency takes form in the nexus of individual resources and rules of the relations in the field where they reside (Wacquant and Bourdieu, 1992). Emancipation is an agentic act of transforming one's conditions and those of the prevailing context, empowering oneself and others to challenge collective mis-recognition by negotiating the terms of inclusion (Morillas, 2023). Our theoretical model on emancipation patterns, mechanisms and outcomes (our typology) helps unpack specific contextual and individual boundary conditions. More specifically, the specific context of our findings helps reveal the importance of 'time, shared interest, and place' as contextual boundary conditions and the endowment of capital as individual-level boundary conditions. Our findings align with those of Lång et al. (2024), who emphasise the critical role of contextual conditions in shaping the experiences of refugee entrepreneurs. These conditions include socio-political climate, available resources and institutional support critical for refugee entrepreneurs to navigate relations and circumstances and succeed in their entrepreneurial endeavours.

As Bourdieu argues, the refugee entrepreneurship field of relations has a slow pace of change. Therefore, emancipatory agency often starts with an individual changing their conditions before they can affect changes in relations where they manifest. When these personal efforts flourish in favourable structural conditions within the host society and community, such as inclusive policies, access to resources and supportive networks, they can inspire and mobilise others. This collective awakening and empowerment can evolve into a powerful movement of collective success, transforming the entire community and fostering widespread social and economic progress. Thus, the ripple effect of individual refugee's attainments, supported by conducive contextual frameworks, can lead to solid and unified collective advancement. Context can afford different positions of power to individuals of other dispositions and resources. Therefore, we demonstrate that the differences in the emancipation experiences of refugee entrepreneurs are closely associated with their capital endowments and their experiences of support structures in institutional contexts. These findings corroborate the work of Simsek (2018), who argues that it is easier for wealthier refugees to overcome legal, bureaucratic and social challenges, constructing a social bridge with local people and getting more support in the form of 'friendship, reciprocity and mutual support' help to grow their businesses. Our evidence also supports the findings of Pergelova et al. (2022), who find that the entrepreneurial motivations of Indigenous entrepreneurs, who may be attempting to emancipate themselves or others, are influential in emancipation practices and outcomes. Our theoretical extension demonstrates that they are likely to bring economic and social change to both countries, that is, Syria and Turkey, as higher objectives of emancipation processes. Through this research on emancipatory entrepreneurship, we hope to change practice, as Dimov et al. (2021) have advocated.

Limitations

A limitation of our study is its primary focus on Syrian refugees in Turkey, which may limit the generalisability of the findings to refugee entrepreneurs in other cultural or socio-political contexts. Additionally, the study's qualitative approach captures in-depth perspectives but may not

fully encompass the broader, quantitative impact of refugee entrepreneurship on the host economy and society. Future research could explore these specific mechanisms of thriving further to draw transferable insights for refugee entrepreneurs from different cultural or socio-political contexts and other disadvantaged segments of society. Equally, research on specific entrepreneurial experiences of women refugees or refugees with disabilities could reveal their needs and challenges, offer ways to enhance their agency and make recommendations for policy for the broader institutional ecosystem.

Policy and practical implications

Our findings suggest that policy approaches to refugee integration and entrepreneurship should move beyond traditional welfare-focused models and instead, emphasise empowerment and self-sufficiency. We offer policy insights and recommend actions for specific international organisations that have the power to influence change, as well as for national policies that can play a crucial role in supporting refugee entrepreneurs in Turkey. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) could lead the effort by acknowledging and promoting the entrepreneurial capacity and contribution of refugees. The United Nations Refugee Agency (UN Refugee Agency) could expand its protection and assistance programmes to encompass support for refugee entrepreneurship. The World Bank could invest in projects that promote economic opportunities for refugees and host states and communities, including support for refugee entrepreneurship. By allocating funding for entrepreneurship training, ecosystem development and comprehensive funding programmes supporting refugee entrepreneurship. Similarly, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) could include support for refugee entrepreneurship in its asylum process and integration programmes. EASO could contribute to the successful economic and social integration of refugees within the European Union by facilitating knowledge-sharing on good practices and cross-fertilising expertise on entrepreneurship education and training via European universities and networks in the business angel world.

The support of international organisations is critical, yet the role of national institutions and local government is undeniable. A critical implication is a need for policies that actively support refugee entrepreneurship as a means of integration, recognising the unique challenges and potential contributions of refugee entrepreneurs. For instance, government and international bodies like the UNHCR and the World Bank could integrate entrepreneurship training and tailored financial support programmes into their existing aid structures, enabling refugees to access the resources and knowledge required to establish and sustain businesses. Legal barriers, such as work permits and business registration challenges, should be streamlined to reduce bureaucratic burdens on refugees, particularly those with limited financial capital or connections. Policies that foster partnerships between local businesses and refugee entrepreneurs could also be encouraged to bridge gaps in resources and knowledge, creating mutually beneficial outcomes for refugees and the host economy.

Thus, alongside utilising all available support from international bodies, more specifically, to support Syrian refugee entrepreneurs in Turkey, local policies should focus on simplifying legal processes, such as work permits and business licensing, to lower bureaucratic barriers and ease formalisation. National programmes could also provide targeted financial assistance and expedite the recognition of qualifications to help refugees match their skills with appropriate roles. Providing culturally and linguistically adapted entrepreneurship training and accessible micro-financing options can further support refugees, particularly those with limited capital, in overcoming initial challenges. As more practical implications, at the municipal level, cities like Istanbul and Gaziantep could establish integration hubs for local and refugee entrepreneurs to foster collaboration, offer language and business training and promote community initiatives that bridge cultural divides.

Mentoring and networking programmes that connect refugees with established local business owners can foster integration, build social capital and create access to local markets. Local government, especially in high-refugee areas, could invest in business hubs or incubators tailored to refugee entrepreneurs, offering shared resources and a supportive community environment that reduces start-up costs. Together, these measures shift from a welfare model to one focused on empowerment, allowing refugees to contribute to the local economy and community actively. By building an inclusive support ecosystem, Turkey can empower refugee entrepreneurs to thrive economically and contribute positively to the local community.

Moreover, policies promoting refugee entrepreneurship should incorporate long-term stability and cultural integration initiatives, such as language training and mentorship programmes relevant to a refugee's background and business experience. These findings suggest that sustained support for business networks and opportunities to connect with the local community can foster a sense of belonging, reduce discrimination and empower refugees as valued contributors to the local economy. Regional programmes that consider the socio-cultural context of refugee populations are also essential, as demonstrated by the impact of cultural alignment on refugee entrepreneur experiences in Turkey. Local government, especially in high-refugee areas, could provide support specific to the geographic and cultural dynamics of the refugee population, promoting a smoother integration process. Ultimately, this approach would shift refugee entrepreneurship support from a survival model to one that facilitates thriving, empowering refugees to fully engage in and contribute to their host society economically and socially. Through concerted efforts to support refugee entrepreneurship, international and national institutions can genuinely embody their mandates of protecting and supporting refugees while working towards long-term solutions to displacement.

Conclusion

Our research has highlighted the significant potential of refugee entrepreneurship as a pathway to empowerment, self-sustainability and thriving. The typology of emancipation provides a framework for policymakers to recognise the diverse profiles of refugee entrepreneurs – from the most constrained to the well-resourced – allowing for tailored interventions that meet specific needs, such as financial aid for resource-limited individuals or business networking for socially 'savvy' entrepreneurs. Additionally, understanding the mechanisms of seeking autonomy and crafting entrepreneurial capacity highlights the importance of policies that reduce dependency, promote skills-building and enable refugees to leverage their particular capabilities in meaningful, empowering ways. Overall, our study shows that symbolic denigration of the resources of refugee entrepreneurs in their new context and the possibilities of overcoming it shape the emancipatory character of Syrian refugees in Turkey. The contextual theorisation of the emancipatory process highlights emancipatory mechanisms in supportive and unsupportive contexts. Emancipation brings about thriving mechanisms beyond coping characterised in most previous literature that highlights how refugee entrepreneurs cope with limited resources and contextual constraints. In this study, we lend hope and agency to refugee entrepreneur experiences in line with their self-constructions of entrepreneurial experience as an emancipatory process with thriving mechanisms. The emancipation mechanisms of refugee entrepreneurs differ based on their associated use of resource mobilisation and contextual conditions. The most striking aspect of our study is that access to resources and a supportive context empower refugee entrepreneurs to move from aversive states of coping to thriving as individuals and communities. Understanding the interplay between contextual mechanisms is essential for designing effective practices and interventions that promote the emancipation and empowerment of refugee entrepreneurs. By recognising the overlapping nature of time, shared interest and place,

stakeholders can develop holistic approaches that address the multifaceted challenges faced by refugee entrepreneurs and create enabling environments for their success.

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Appendix. Emancipation impetus: additional quotations.

Breaking free from	Illustrative quotations
Economic constraints	'I had to find a job, and this job was easy'. (Badriya A., most oppressed) 'I was working for peanuts in large organisations. It was not more than this. I keep food on the table for my family'. (Adwit P., most oppressed) 'I do not see this as a risk since there is nothing to lose'. (Taabid B., politically and socially savvy) 'When I arrived in Turkey, I did not have anything. I worked in the mornings and evenings. I watched other curtain manufacturers (or retailers)'. (Buhair B., most oppressed)
Discrimination at the workplace	'While the company is paying 3500 TL for the drawer, I am paid 2000 TL, although I have been doing the same job'. (Taabid B., politically and socially savvy) 'I chose to launch my own business since I could not get what I deserved'. (Fahaz S., undervalued)
Rigid working conditions (entrepreneurial mindset)	'I am not used to working in other businesses; previously, I did my own work. When I first came here, I worked in one organisation for one year and 1, 5 in another. I had problems since I was not used to it. We all worked with our father. That is why, saving money with my brother, we launched our own business'. (Ubad A., most oppressed) 'I worked until I saved enough money to launch my own business. Because I could not get used to working for others'. (Yaasin B., most oppressed) 'I have competency and money. Why would I work for others?' (Rezzan U., undervalued)
Rigid working conditions; entrepreneurial legacy (maintaining family business)	'I am resourceful(wealthy). I came here just because of the war. I do this business to maintain my father's occupation'. (Abraham S., undervalued) 'We launched this laser work since it was my father's occupation'. (Aaban H., climbers) 'This was my father's occupation in 1991. We had three stores in Syria. It was difficult at initial times, but now, everything is settled down, thank God'. (Ubad A., most oppressed) 'I launched this business with the support of my brothers. I am trained by them. They do the same work in Egypt and Syria'. (Baar B., climbers) 'We launched this business because of my brothers' experiences and strong business networks'. (Calah D., climbers) 'This is an 83-year-old firm. My father was busy with commerce for many years. [I do this business, because] this was my father's occupation (dried nuts and fruits-exportation'. (Abdul H., climbers)
Shame (desire to be respected)	'They do not respect us although we are doing business here'. (Fahaz S., undervalued)
Release others from economic and socio-cultural restrictions	'Our first purpose is producing and launching new lines (in the pharmaceutical industry) dominated by white-collar employees. We have been working to make Syria a liveable place'. (Calah D., climbers) 'We aim to contribute to the economy through drumming up the business'. (Abdul H., climbers)