

# **Empowerment, Wellbeing and Mindset of Female Ecotourism Entrepreneurs in North Cyprus**

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Submitted to the  
Institute of Graduate Studies and Research  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy  
in  
Tourism Management

Eastern Mediterranean University  
September 2020  
Gazimağusa, North Cyprus

Approval of the Institute of Graduate Studies and Research

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## **ABSTRACT**

As a small island in the Mediterranean, Cyprus is striving to develop a sustainable tourism model. Despite the limited opportunities due to the ongoing political problems of the island, the number and activities of women ecotourism entrepreneurs in Northern Cyprus has shown inspiring growth over the last decade. This study examines the impacts of ecotourism initiatives on women's gender roles, from the perspectives of women, who are influenced by the traditional lifestyles in a developing country, North Cyprus, stuck in a frozen conflict. It assesses the achievements and challenges women face in ecotourism and its impact on their empowerment and wellbeing and the effects of an incremental growth mindset. The empowerment of these women through tourism can lead to their flourishing - higher levels of wellbeing - that influences their commitment and further involvement in the sector. Both qualitative and quantitative research methods were conducted to compare the results. The quantitative research model was developed based on the Self-Determination Theory. Our sample included 200 women ecotourism entrepreneurs in rural areas of Northern Cyprus. Our results show that women who have growth mindsets, i.e. those that believe people's characteristics such as abilities are not fixed, benefit more from an empowering environment and reach higher levels of flourishing. A qualitative methodology with a feminist research was adopted to collect detailed information from forty female ecotourism entrepreneurs. Valuable information about their experiences, beliefs and attitudes, from the perspective of these female entrepreneurs, was collected through semi-structured interviews.

The qualitative results supported that these women experienced an increase in their perceived economic, social and psychological empowerment and in their levels of wellbeing. However, due to gender inequality and the frozen conflict situation of North Cyprus, it was found that women who have a high growth mindset felt lower levels of wellbeing than those with a fixed mindset. This was because women with a high growth mindset were more aware of the limitations imposed on them by gender inequality and the political situation pertaining to North Cyprus which caused them to be frustrated.

The research concludes that although all female ecotourism entrepreneurs experienced more empowerment and wellbeing, those with a high incremental mindset were frustrated by external factors which circumscribed their activities.

The results can guide policy makers and stakeholder organizations in their efforts to support rural development, microfinance opportunities and women's empowerment and well-being.

**Keywords:** Self Determination Theory, Psychological Empowerment, Flourishing, Women Entrepreneurship, Growth Mindset, Ecotourism

## ÖZ

Akdeniz'de küçük bir ada olan Kıbrıs, sürdürülebilir bir turizm modeli geliştirmeyi hedeflemektedir. Adanın süregelen siyasi sorunları nedeniyle fırsatların sınırlı olmasına rağmen, Kuzey Kıbrıs'taki kadın ekoturizm girişimcilerinin sayısı ve faaliyetleri son on yılda ilham verici bir büyüme göstermiştir. Bu çalışma, ekoturizm girişimlerinin kadınların cinsiyet rolleri üzerindeki etkilerini, gelişmekte olan bir ülke olan Kuzey Kıbrıs'ta donmuş bir çatışmaya sıkışmış ve geleneksel yaşam tarzı etkisi altında olan kadınların bakış açısından incelemektedir. Kadınların ekoturizmde karşılaştıkları başarıları ve zorlukları, güçlenmeleri ve refahları üzerindeki etkilerini ve gelişime açık zihniyetin etkilerini değerlendirir. Turizm sektöründe girişimci kadınların güçlendirilmesi ve yetkinliklerinin geliştirilmesi, sektöre daha fazla dahil olmalarını sağlayacaktır. Kadın girişimcilerin güçlendirilmesi ülkemizin de daha yüksek gelişmişlik ve refah düzeylerine ulaşabilmesine yardımcı olacaktır. Araştırma modelimiz Kendi Kaderini Tayin Teorisi'ne (Self Determination Theory) dayanarak geliştirilmiştir. Örneklemimiz Kuzey Kıbrıs'ın kırsal bölgelerindeki 200 kadın ekoturizm girişimcisini içermektedir. Sonuçlarımıza göre, düşünce yapıları “gelişime” odaklı olan girişimci kadınlar - yani insanların yetenekleri ve diğer birçok özelliğinin sabit olmadığına inananlar – ve “sabit” düşünce yapısı olanlar insanların yetenekleri ve diğer birçok özelliğinin değişmediğine inananlara göre daha farklılık göstermektedir. “Gelişime” odaklı olanlar “Sabit” odaklı olanlara göre güçlendirici bir ortamdan daha fazla yararlanabilmektedir ve daha yüksek seviyelerde “iyi oluş düzeyine” (flourishing) ulaşmaktadır. Ayrıca, kırk kadın ekoturizm girişimcisinden ayrıntılı bilgi toplamak için feminist araştırmalarla nitel bir metodoloji benimsenmiştir. Bu kadın girişimcilerin bakış açısından deneyimleri, inançları ve

tutumları hakkında değerli bilgiler yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler yoluyla toplanmıştır.

Nitel sonuçlar, bu kadınların algılanan ekonomik, sosyal ve psikolojik güçlenmelerinde ve refah düzeylerinde bir artış yaşadıklarını desteklemiştir. Bununla birlikte, cinsiyet eşitsizliği ve Kuzey Kıbrıs'ın donmuş çatışma durumu nedeniyle, “gelişime açık” zihniyete sahip kadınların, “sabit zihniyete” sahip olanlardan daha düşük refah düzeyleri hissettikleri bulunmuştur. Bunun nedeni, “gelişime açık zihniyet” seviyesi yüksek kadınların cinsiyet eşitsizliği ve Kuzey Kıbrıs'la ilgili olarak hayal kırıklığına neden olan siyasi durumun getirdiği sınırlamaların daha fazla farkında olmalarıydı. Araştırma, tüm kadın ekoturizm girişimcilerinin daha fazla güçlendirme ve refah yaşamasına rağmen, “gelişme odaklı” bir zihniyete sahip olanların faaliyetlerini sınırlayan dış faktörlerden dolayı daha fazla hayal kırıklığına uğradığı sonucuna varmaktadır. Araştırma bulguları hem hükümetlere hem de sivil toplum örgütlerine ekoturizm ve kırsal kalkınmanın desteklenmesinde dikkat edilmesi gereken önemli unsurlar konusunda yol gösterici olabilecektir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Kendi Kaderini Tayin Teorisi, Psikolojik Güçlendirme, Gelişme, Kadın Girişimciliği, Gelişme ve Sabit Odaklı Düşünce Yapısı, Ekoturizm

## **DEDICATION**

I would like to dedicate this thesis to all women who face gender inequality at any point in their lives.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

I hereby would like to thank my supervisors Prof. Dr. Cem Tanova and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ilkay Yorgancıođlu Molaney for their help and support in this chapter of my life, and to my life partner Erel Cankan for his empowerment throughout this journey.



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# Chapter 1

## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a background on the importance of conducting research regarding to the mindsets, empowerment and flourishing of women entrepreneurs who take part in the ecotourism activities in rural areas of North Cyprus. Additionally, this chapter clarifies the aims, research questions, and contributions of this study to well being of women entrepreneurs through sustainable tourism development. The chapter also presents an overview of the thesis structure.

### 1.1 Research Background

Women face greater barriers in entering the workforce compared to their male counterparts. Domestic work, raising children and caring for elders are generally assigned to women. Thus, most of the time, they cannot take part in positions in the workplace and worklife, and they are forced to stay one step behind. Specially, the situation is even more difficult in rural regions for women where opportunities for employment are limited and women face more pressure to take full responsibility for the domestic work-load.

Ecotourism can serve as an opportunity where women can be productive, engage in gainful activity, and contribute to their neighbourhood and region. When women can be empowered through ecotourism, this can have both individual and community level benefits. Women's well-being can be enhanced at the individual level and the region will benefit from sustainable development as a tourism destination.

Ecotourism has gained popularity especially in the recent years as a tool that can benefit communities as a sustainable and long lasting development in rural areas (Stronza & Gordillo, 2008). Ecotourism involves and engages the locals and guests and focuses on locally grown produce and locally made products. Thus, it increases the commitment of the locals and provides an authentic experience for the guests especially in the rural areas. Another benefit of ecotourism is that if it is administered accurately, it is an approach that preserves the local traditions and culture as well as the environment and the nature (Butler, R., & Hinch, 2007). Ecotourism is also accepted as a new opportunity to create new jobs, new business entities and training of the people. Also, it gives the opportunity to preserve natural resources while providing economic income (Caroline Ashley, 1998).

Small business units owned by women have been increasing over time according to studies (Carter , S . L . and Shaw, 2006). Women's increased involvement in the economy contributes to the economic environment (Allen et al., 2007).

This thesis studies the women small business owners who are involved in ecotourism entrepreneurship in the villages of North Cyprus.

Our aim is to investigate how the different mindsets of women entrepreneurs how much they feel empowered may influence their subjective wellbeing as they engage in the ecotourism activities.

Not every effort or investment in ecotourism will produce similar results because ecotourism is very much influenced by and has an influence on the social system, economic development and the approaches to regional development. So the success of

the ecotourism interventions and investment in ecotourism is dependent on many factors including the leadership styles, ownership and commitment of the locals, the support and engagement of authorities at the local level as well as perceptions of the local community (Farrelly, 2011).

For effective ecotourism development, the factors that influence the effectiveness and resilience of ecotourism entrepreneurs should be understood well. Thus, by understanding how empowerment through tourism can influence the wellbeing of women ecotourism entrepreneurs who may have differing outlooks or mindsets, we can help to develop better policies and support systems.

Empowered women have higher levels of confidence and esteem with their roles gaining in status in their communities and their homes (Carter, S., & Al-Dajani, 2008). Empowerment leads to self-confidence, self-determination, motivation, ambition and resilience. This is the reason the study relates women empowerment with subjective well-being.

## **1.2 Purpose of the Thesis**

Due to the human nature, we all want to have access to things we like, and try to increase our standard of living. Economics and financial position, as well as status within a society have an influence in the range of our choices and possibilities. Generally it is assumed that to achieve our goals we must join the workforce and try our best to be successful in work life. But usually this process is stressful and difficult to deal with. Balancing work and home life is an challenging issue, as both working conditions and family issues sometimes require more time and energy and if not well managed, may cause increased level of stress in our lives (Moorhead, G., &



Griffin, 2010) . When we observe businesses, most of them demand their employees to spend long hours in the workplace, with an overload work. In the modern worklife, many organizations challenge employees to constantly improve their competences in order to keep their positions.

According to the research, overload work and not having performance feedback are the two main stressors in work life (Murray-Gibbons & Gibbons, 2007). Having said that, if we talk about women, it should be mentioned that it is more difficult to endure in the business life as a result of so many constraints that women experience like glass ceilings or facing unfair treatments such as inappropriate payments or not receiving the endorsement they deserve (Mattis, 2004).

In most societies, particularly in underdeveloped countries, women experience a great deal of challenges and retain significant level of pressure to balance family work life due to the domestic house works and the obligations of the youngsters are expected from women (Gutek et al., 1991). Thus, instead of working at a workplace, sometimes, they prefer to start their own businesses, as it is seen as a good option by women to balance their family work life and earn their own money in order to become self-determinant through empowering themselves in all aspects.

When the literature is analyzed, it can be seen that past researchers focused on women entrepreneurs mainly to find reasons why they became entrepreneurs or to compare the gender differences in entrepreneurship. But, until now, there is no research has been done to analyze the mindsets of the women who took action to become an entrepreneur and through that whether they obtain empowerment which lead them to have increased subjective well-being.

We think that, the characteristic of the mindset is an important indicator to take some risks and get in action and to be successful. According to Dweck (2006) we can categorize people into two; those with fixed mindset, and those with growth mindset (B. C. S. Dweck, 2006). Therefore, we try to test whether in reality, the type of women entrepreneurs' mindset have influence on their empowerment and their subjective well-being.

This study analyzed whether those women entrepreneurs obtain empowerment in four aspects: economic empowerment, psychological empowerment, social empowerment and political empowerment based on the Scheyvens'(1999) empowerment model (Scheyvens, 1999).

So, the study analyzes how the four empowerment types discussed in previous studies (McMillan et al., 2011), are perceived by women entrepreneurs through their involvement in ecotourism activities (Rowlands, J. 1997). While testing their level of empowerment, the study aims to analyze the influence of their mindsets in the path that they become entrepreneurs and achieving empowerment and therefore their subjective well-being.

Furthermore, this study will be the first study which focuses on women entrepreneurs who engage in Ecotourism activities in North Cyprus, where the ecotourism has been recently becoming popular to have sustainable tourism and to protect the cultural heritage. So while we were researching, we aimed to reach a conclusion if ecotourism can be used as an efficient tool to increase subjective well-being of women living in rural areas in Cyprus, by opening new opportunities for women empowerment.

### **1.3 Contribution of the Thesis**

There has been an increasing interest in going beyond the idea that lack of psychological problems is equal to high psychological health (Hone et al., 2014; Keyes, 2002). Researchers in positive psychology have been investigating what can improve well-being instead of focusing merely on what limits it. As a result, flourishing which is described as high levels of well-being and defined as positive emotional state that leads to healthy social and psychological states has been receiving more attention (Fredrickson & Losada, 2005).

Moreover, in addition to psychological well-being, flourishing also indicates a more comprehensive well-being of a person from a variety of aspects such as social relations, optimism, and purpose (Diener et al. 2010a; Fredrickson & Losada, 2005). When a person experiences increased amount of emotional, social and psychological well-being, this can be explained as flourishing (Keyes, 2002).

Like a flower that blooms and experiences a non-linear growth when the right kind of environment and nutrients are provided, people who are flourishing, will experience an amplified level of well-being that results in optimal happiness and fulfillment in life. They feel they have a purpose in life, they feel they are competent in what they are doing and feel positive about who they are. They are open to personal growth. They feel they are experiencing personal development, change and expansion of their capacities. Ultimately, they feel autonomy and self-control which give them the power to choose their own destiny themselves rather than living a life that is chosen by someone else (Keyes, 2002).

This explanation is supported by Self Determination Theory which is a comprehensive theory of motivation that implies that in order to experience flourishing, psychological needs of people which are competence, relatedness and autonomy must be met (Deci, E. L., & Ryan, 1985).

According to self-determination theory, individuals from all societies require essential psychological necessities for autonomy, capability and relatedness. They argue that if these requirements are bolstered by social settings, flourishing is enhanced (Deci, E. L., & Ryan, 1985; Ryan, R. M., & Deci, 2000). Furthermore, at a social level Putnam (2000) and Helliwel et al (2009) argue that well-being of societies is also dependent on the social capital of individuals. Conversely, when cultural context and other external environmental factors put some restrictions and limitations on those necessities, the level of flourishing is reduced.

Economic independence helps to provide more autonomy and independent decision making in satisfying needs. In most cultures, especially in developing countries, women face many difficulties and experience a high level of stress in balancing family and work life, as domestic work and the responsibility for children have been assigned to women (Guttek et al., 1991). Also, when considering the role of gender in the workforce, it is harder for women to survive in the workplace for many reasons, including encountering the glass ceiling, receiving unequal wages, and not receiving the promotions they deserve (Mattis, 2004).

Therefore, some women choose to become entrepreneurs and run their own businesses rather than working somewhere else to earn money. Entrepreneurship may help women increase their self-reliance and empowerment. A small

establishment targeting tourism in the context of an ecotourism initiative can serve as an opportunity for women to be integrated in both social and economic life (Goeldner & Ritchie, 2009).

Especially for the women who live in rural areas, the development of eco-tourism can provide numerous work opportunities and have led them to employment and entrepreneurship. Taking part in eco-tourism activities gives them more economic freedom through the ability to earn money and enhances their social condition by giving them an additional role apart from their gender role (Shokouhi, A. K., Khoshfar, G., & Karimi, 2013).

As personality has a high impact on human behavior and their choices, in this study, the Implicit Person Theory (IPT) is also added in our model. IPT is a particular presumption about the adaptability of a person's qualities that affect his or her conduct (C. S. Dweck, 1986; Heslin, P. A., & VandeWalle, 2011). According to Dweck (2006), we can classify people into two groups: those who have a fixed mindset – who believe that people do not change and those who have a growth or incremental mindset – who believe that people can and do change (B. C. S. Dweck, 2006).

In the current study, we have tested if the types of mindset women entrepreneurs possess actually influence their psychological and overall well-being, which can be assessed by their flourishing. In line with the self-determination theory, we also include psychological empowerment through tourism in our model to see how it interacts with the relationship and how it affects the women entrepreneurs' levels of flourishing given their different mindsets.

In the light of Self Determination Theory (SDT), we expect that, women with incremental mindsets, who believe in the possibility of change, will be willing to take risks to determine their own destiny and to improve their living conditions to achieve their goals. However, based on SDT, we expect they will only have enhanced well-being if their cultural and social contexts provide the necessary opportunities for them. Our study has been conducted in North Cyprus, where gender inequality and frozen conflict are important factors which put restrictions on women.

Therefore, we expect to see a negative relationship between incremental mindset and the level of flourishing due to these restrictions in the context. We expect that women entrepreneurs who believe in themselves and want to take actions to control their lives, will be more frustrated if they are limited as a result of these external factors and their flourishing level is lessened. On the other hand, those entrepreneurs that do not have a belief in the possibility of change will be less inclined to see opportunities to grow and don't expect any change, consequently, will feel less disappointed with the obstacles and may have higher level of perceived flourishing.

However, based on SDT, we believe that, when those women entrepreneurs with incremental mindset are empowered, they will feel autonomous and competent. Also, when they are psychologically empowered to engage ecotourism entrepreneurial activities, their feeling of relatedness to their region will be boosted. Therefore, empowerment can reverse the negative relationship between incremental mindset and flourishing. Hence, through psychological empowerment, those women entrepreneurs with incremental mindset can achieve higher levels of wellbeing and flourishing.

The results are also supported by the qualitative research. For the purposes of this research, a qualitative methodology with a feminist research design was adopted to collect detailed information about the experiences and the challenges faced by female entrepreneurs participating in ecotourism. As feminist researchers, we were committed to understanding the experiences of women and gendered power relationships and discourses in a predominantly patriarchal society (Zembyat T. A. and Mappes J.S. (1997) from the perspective of the women being researched. This research was done by, for and about women and thus was grounded in feminist values and beliefs.

The results showed that these women experienced an increase in their perceived economic, social and psychological empowerment and in their levels of wellbeing. However, due to gender inequality and the frozen conflict situation of North Cyprus, it was found that women who have a high growth mindset felt lower levels of wellbeing than those with a fixed mindset. This was because women with a high growth mindset were more aware of the limitations imposed on them by gender inequality and the political situation pertaining to North Cyprus which caused them to be frustrated.

## **1.4 Approach**

### **1.4.1 Sample and Procedure**

The purposive sample method was used. A list of sample populations was obtained from the Businesswomen Association of Northern Cyprus. The list consisted of 305 women entrepreneurs who were involved in ecotourism activities, such as traditional handcrafting, producing traditional food. The population also includes boutique hotel or guesthouse owners and small restaurant owners who specialize in traditional

foods. These women live in rural areas, mainly in small towns within five main regions of Northern Cyprus.

For our quantitative research, we contacted 200 women and asked them to complete the questionnaire. Data were collected in the period between April and June 2018 by visiting the women and in their respective locations.

For our qualitative research also, in tune with feminist values we used in-depth interviewing techniques to collect data (Wigginton & Lafrance, 2019). In total, 40 women involved in ecotourism activities in different parts of North Cyprus were interviewed. The size of the sample was determined by the level of saturation where no new categories, themes or explanations emerged (Neuman, 2014). Four of these interviewees were known as leaders/mentors in their regional areas. All of our interviews took place in the homes of the interviewees where they were able to relax in their own environments.

#### **1.4.2 Measures**

##### **Measures used for Quantitative Research Study:**

To measure flourishing, the Turkish version of the Flourishing Scale which had been adapted by Telef in 2001 (Telef, 2001) was used in our study. Incremental mindset was assessed with an 8-item implicit person theory created by Levy and Dweck in 1998 (Levy et al., 1998). Flourishing scale consists of 8 items that evaluate respondents' perceived success in major segments of their lives, which provides a single psychological well-being score (Diener et al. 2010a). Resident Empowerment through Tourism Scale (RETS) was used to assess psychological empowerment of women entrepreneurs engaging in ecotourism activities, as it is a reliable and valid



measurement tool that assess resident perceptions of empowerment (Boley & McGehee, 2014a).

For the purposes of the qualitative research, Scheyvens (1999), proposed economic, psychological, social and political empowerment framework designed for analysis of the impacts of ecotourism ventures on local communities will be used since she provides a detailed description of what empowerment should look like within a sustainable tourism development.

### **1.4.3 Data Analysis**

For quantitative research study, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was applied using Varimax Rotation in SPSS to find conceptually incompatible items with a correlation threshold of 0.40 as suggested by Kim and Mueller (Kim, J., & Mueller, 1978). Analyses illustrated 3 factors that cumulatively explain 62% of the deviation, with eigenvalues above 1. The consistency of the items in the instruments used in the study was checked with the threshold Cronbach's alpha (Nunnally, J. C., & Bernstein, 1994) of 0.70. One item from the flourishing scale had a loading below 0.50 and was eliminated as recommended by Hair, Anderson, Tatham, and Black, and DeVellis (DeVellis, 2012; Hair, J. F., Anderson, R. E., Tatham, R. L., & Black, 1998).

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), as indicated by Hinkin (Hinkin, 1998), was used to assess the goodness of fit of the model and the items used in the model. The high loadings in the CFA demonstrate that the study has construct validity, Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and Composite Reliability (CR) was also used to ensure the internal consistency and illustrate the convergent and discriminant validity of the study.

For qualitative research study, the data were analyzed in relation to the following researcher constructed themes, based on the narratives of the women and on literature: empowerment, gender discrimination, frozen conflict, incremental mindset and well-being. We analyzed the empowerment potential of home-based ecotourism entrepreneurship undertaken by marginalized Turkish Cypriot women residing in under developed regions affected by frozen conflict and its impacts on the incremental mindset and well-being of these women.

### **1.5 Structure of the Thesis**

Four chapters are included in this thesis. Chapter one is the general introduction chapter and provides the research background, purpose of the study, proposed methodology, and importance of the study for the field of tourism and hospitality literature.

In chapter two, study one which is the quantitative research part of this thesis is discussed. The chapter starts with the introduction part of study one. In this chapter literature will be discussed with the conceptualization of the first study's variables including flourishing, psychological empowerment, growth (incremental) mindset, self-determination theory, ecotourism, women entrepreneurship and frozen conflict. Theoretical backgrounds of the study will be discussed in this chapter as well.

The proposed hypotheses of the study one will be developed through review of relative past studies and theoretical frameworks. Also, the chapter describes the adopted methodology of research design including sample of study one, process of questionnaire design, measurement items, pilot study, and back-translation along with the procedure of data collection and steps of data analysis.

The chapter continues with the presentation of study one's empirical results. Statistical analysis, measurement results and structural model test results will be presented in detail.

Furthermore the findings and continues with theoretical implications, practical implications and the limitations of the study one along with future recommendations will be conferred in this chapter.

In chapter three, study two which is the qualitative research part of this thesis is introduced. The chapter starts with the introduction part of study one can.

The chapter continues with the literature review section of study one. The literature will be discussed with the conceptualization of the study two variables including gender and tourism, empowerment framework, ecotourism and North Cyprus and the status of rural women in North Cyprus. Theoretical backgrounds of the study will be discussed in this chapter as well.

Methodology of research design of study two, including sample of study two, data collection and steps of data analysis are given.

The last part of this chapter presents study two's findings and results. It continues with the conclusion part which explains the discussion and conclusion of study two including the theoretical implications, practical implications and the limitations of this study along with future recommendations.

Chapter four discusses the discussion and conclusion of the thesis.

## **Chapter 2**

### **STUDY ONE**

As a Mediterranean island with ample sunshine and beautiful beaches, Cyprus has long been a tourism destination. Although the political problem that divides the north and south has resulted in two separate administrations, initially both sides had focused on mass tourism strategies for rapid economic results but have recently become increasingly concerned with the potential damage that mass tourism may have on the environment and the issue of sustainability. In the past, the policymakers had developed incentive systems to attract large scale investments, but now there is more interest in encouraging smaller scale and sustainable tourism offerings which involve the local population.

#### **2.1 Introduction**

Tourism and especially ecotourism can enable women to be more integrated in social and economic life (Goeldner, C. R., & Ritchie, 2009) and entrepreneurship may help women increase their self-reliance and empowerment. Northern Cyprus has seen an increase in women ecotourism entrepreneurs who have been encouraged by community development programs and festivals (Gunsoy & Hannam, 2013). The wellbeing of these women entrepreneurs and their feeling of flourishing through their role in ecotourism is important because it is a determinant of their continued involvement.

Especially for the women who live in rural areas, the development of ecotourism can provide work opportunities. Taking part in eco-tourism activities not only provides more economic independence for women by allowing them to have an income through their business but also provides social status (Shokouhi, A. K., Khoshfar, G., & Karimi, 2013).

Although there has been an increased interest in ecotourism, much of the academic ecotourism literature has not adequately considered the entrepreneurs who are critical for the success of ecotourism (Thompson et al., 2018). To provide a better understanding of the impact of ecotourism on the lives of the women ecotourism entrepreneurs who typically did not have prior professional experience, we investigated how the psychological empowerment of the women entrepreneurs through effective support programs influence their wellbeing or specifically feelings of flourishing. Furthermore, we investigate how having a growth mindset may amplify the effect of psychological empowerment on flourishing.

The current study examines the growth mindset and flourishing relationship among ecotourism entrepreneurs in North Cyprus and explores how psychological empowerment through tourism interacts the relationship among growth mindset and flourishing. The study provides findings from a context that may be considered less supportive for women entrepreneurs. Furthermore, by investigating how the impact psychological empowerment through tourism may influence the growth mindset - flourishing relationship, the study contributes to the theoretical discussions in the mindset literature.

## **2.2 Literature Review**

This chapter discusses concept of psychological empowerment, growth mindset and flourishing of women ecotourism entrepreneurs in North Cyprus context in detail. The concept of psychological empowerment as the moderator variable between growth mindset and flourishing in North Cyprus is further explained. All variables of this study are clarified. Finally this chapter reviews the relative theoretical background of the study namely self-determination theory.

### **2.2.1 Women's Entrepreneurship**

The inflexible roles and responsibilities of women that are imposed by the society and cultural norms inherited from past generations should not be overlooked when discussing the position of women in work life. Women and men are exposed to certain gender role instructions from their birth to death.

It is mentioned in the literature that the definition of gender includes mental and cultural meanings beyond its biological meaning (Stoller, 1992). According to sociologists, gender-related behavior is the result of socialization rather than of biological features. Exhibiting gender-related conduct is a fundamental phase of defining how we see ourselves, how other people react to our behaviors and how we react to their behaviors. This can be seen as a major influence of social development, especially for women.

Their environment has a great impact on the development of gender recognition of a child. Girls grow up learning that they need to be forgiving, compliant, indulgent and benevolent. Generally, distinctive attributes are taught to female and male children. Even toys are chosen differently for girls; generally, baby dolls or toys related to

housework, such as cookers or irons, are given to girls to teach them about their future responsibilities, which include caring for children and keeping the house tidy. The idea of being married is emphasized as a necessity for having a proper identity in most patriarchal cultures where the identity of a woman is defined when she marries (Singh, 2016).

The literature affirms that the definition of gender includes mental and cultural meanings beyond its biological meaning (Stoller, 1992). According to sociologists, gender-related behavior is the result of socialization rather than of biological features. Exhibiting gender-related conduct is a fundamental phase of defining how we see ourselves; how other people react to our behaviors and how we react to their behaviors. This is a major influence of social development, especially for women. (Singh, 2016).

According to a UN report, 70% of those who suffer from low living conditions are women. Only 1% of total assets of the world are owned by women and only 10% of world income goes to women. (UN WOMEN, 2018). Due to the inequalities that women face in society, the number of uneducated women around the world is much higher than the number of uneducated men (Bansal, S. P., & Kumar, 2013).

Thus, the opportunities for women to change this condition are also made more difficult due to these facts. It is a challenge for policy makers and scholars to find ways to enable women to be more integrated into the workforce or become entrepreneurs and be more in control over their lives. As is widely known, we also believe, if women change, the whole environment around them changes.

Entrepreneurs in general contribute to the economy by providing products and services and ecotourism entrepreneurs in particular focus on locally grown and made products and establish strong bonds with their guests. Women ecotourism entrepreneurs, who are the focus of the current study, are critical to developing more sustainable systems and their willingness to achieve long-term success in the tourism industry affects the economy in a positive way.

More women are becoming entrepreneurs worldwide. Some choose it due to financial necessity and the difficulties they face in finding salaried employment, while others may choose to become entrepreneurs due to the opportunities they see or their desire to make a difference. Most of these women entrepreneurs, however, also need to be able to balance their family life while they manage their business (Itani, H., Sidani, Y. M., & Baalbaki, 2011).

Although, the entrepreneurship provides an opportunity to earn money, there are stresses involved since the entrepreneur needs to take risks and often has to work for very long hours. These stresses can lead to exhaustion if mechanisms do not exist to reduce the pressure. Nevertheless, prior researches have demonstrated that those that are self-employed have higher levels of job satisfaction compared to other employees.

This result holds true even when controlled for income, occupation and competences. Nikolova (2019) argues that this is due to the autonomy and interesting work that comes from managing one's own business (Nikolova, 2019). An entrepreneur has to identify opportunities and devise a strategy to achieve goals, determine procedures



that they will follow, manage their cashflow establish links with suppliers and manage partners or employees (Patzelt & Shepherd, 2011).

Previous studies on entrepreneurship have uncovered that those who consider starting a new business have various motivations. Some become entrepreneurs by necessity since they cannot find any other job while some become entrepreneurs because they identify an opportunity (Hechavarria, D. M., Ingram, A., Justo, R., & Terjesen, 2012). There is evidence that women are more likely to be entrepreneurs due to necessity-based motivation compared to male business entrepreneurs.

Various studies conducted in the USA, for instance, have demonstrated that male business entrepreneurs have become entrepreneurs with the motivation to be more powerful, richer and to be their own boss while women are more likely to find themselves in the entrepreneur role inspired by earning an income to improve their standard of life (Kelley, D. J., Brush, C. G., Greene, G. P., & Litovsky, 2011).

Necessity entrepreneurship plays an even greater role in women's entrepreneurship in developing countries compared to opportunity motivation (Carter, S. L., Anderson, S., & Shaw, 2001). Number of women entrepreneurs has been rising rapidly in the developing countries (Allen et al., 2007). Heyzer (2006) pointed out that women who take part in the economy as small business owners strengthen and improve women's living standards (Heyzer, 2006) as well as contribute to the overall economy of their country.

### **2.2.2 Ecotourism**

Tourism and ecotourism provide opportunities for women to become more involved in the economic and social life (Goeldner & Ritchie, 2009). With the development of tourism, many opportunities for women to become employed or to establish their own business arose. Tourism has provided more economic independence for women and business ownership has elevated their social status. Tourism is an important, employment-stimulating sector which is thriving around the world.

World Tourism Organization estimates that approximately 96.7 million individuals are directly employed in the tourism sector and together with indirect occupations this is approximately 254 million employees (United Nations, 2017). Numerous nations rely on this energetic industry their main source of national income, job creation and growth.

Ecotourism has been emerging as a means of long-term oriented and sustainable community development alternative (Scheyvens, 2007). With a reaction to the unsustainable nature of mass tourism, if ecotourism can be implemented effectively, it can add to the natural preservation of wildlife and the environment and provide income generating opportunities for the community (Butler, R., & Hinch, 2007).

To accomplish sustainable development in tourism, women should be encouraged to take part in tourism activities (Shokouhi, A. K., Khoshfar, G., & Karimi, 2013). Apart from several exceptions (Reimer & Walter, 2013), gender has not been the main focus of research in ecotourism. However, ecotourism provides important opportunities for women especially in the rural areas, and therefore the gender perspective is important to be considered in studies of ecotourism.

Ecotourism can be distinguished from conventional tourism by focusing more on being close to the nature and society, preservation rather than consumption, and community involvement. Ecotourism also focuses on the protection of local environmental resources and a minimal tourism impact (Honey, 1999). Furthermore, ecotourism strengthens the local population and provides financial advantages for the community. Although, the understanding of ecotourism might differ somewhat for various stakeholders, ecotourism is a mindful way to travel, as ecotourism visitors do not harm nature or local features but instead appreciate and protect them (Ceballos-Lascuráin, 1996).

Knowing the importance of supporting women's entrepreneurship for its economic, social and psychological benefits, in our research, we chose women entrepreneurs who were involved in ecotourism activities in Northern Cyprus as our study population.

### **2.2.3 Psychological Empowerment through Tourism**

The term empowerment is used by different groups of people and organizations to describe the ways to improve the state of the individuals or groups that can be considered as disadvantaged (Walker, S., Valaoras, G., Gurung, D., & Godde, 2001; Zuckerman, 2002). Elias and Ferguson (2007) define empowerment as the right of people to make individual choices, make their decisions on their own, and have dignity (Elias, J., & Ferguson, 2007).

Empowerment is about enabling people to be more reliant on themselves, to increase their self esteem and confidence, to allow them to take charge of their destiny, and to enable them to influence the process of social change (Bystydzienski, 1992).

Scheyvens (1999) used a model of “empowerment through tourism” that focuses on political, economic, social, and psychological empowerment (Scheyvens, 1999).

Psychological empowerment is used to determine whether women’s self-respect has increased as a result of the education and special training provided to them and their contributions to the community due to tourism activities. The degrees of respect they receive from the community and the increases in their self-esteem are also factors that affect their degree of self-respect.

Self-determination theory (SDT) is a macro-theory of human inspiration, identity advancement and well-being. The theory particularly concentrates on will or self-determined conduct and the social and social circumstances that support it. SDT additionally hypothesizes an arrangement of fundamental and all-inclusive mental requirements, in particular those for self-sufficiency, proficiency and congruity, the satisfaction of which is viewed as fundamental and basic to being a vigorous person despite one’s culture or phase of growth.

Ryan and Deci (2001) argue that prosperity is not best caught by hedonic originations of "bliss" alone (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Rather, SDT utilizes the idea of well-being or prosperity as an indispensable, reciprocal approach. Last, since autonomy is encouraged by thoughtful mindfulness, SDT underlines the aspect of mindfulness used in controlling oneself and one’s well-being.

SDT is integral to the definition of strengthening from Elias and Ferguson (2007), who explained empowerment as the idea of control in ruling one’s own life and having a sense of pride or approval (Elias, J., & Ferguson, 2007). Bystydzienski

(1992) proposes empowerment as a process of strengthening that gives a person the capacity to self-administer, have the ability to determine their own everyday life and eventually take action to create a social change (Bystydzienski, 1992).

Prior research also argues that necessity entrepreneurs experience improvement in their mental health due to perceived autonomy (Nikolova, 2019). Bhuiyan and Ivlevs (2019), states that very few researches have studied the impacts of micro entrepreneurship on subjective well-being, although entrepreneurship can be seen as a powerful tool against deprivation in undeveloped countries where people are mostly poor and it is hard to find jobs (Bhuiyan & Ivlevs, 2019).

Elias and Ferguson (2007) define empowerment as the right of people to make individual choices, make their decisions on their own, and have dignity (Elias, J., & Ferguson, 2007). Empowerment can be seen as the process of becoming more confident, to take charge of their lives, to determine their own destiny and to influence the social change (Bystydzienski, 1992).

Spreitzer stated in 1995, “Psychological empowerment refers to the intrinsic task motivation that results in feelings of competence, impact, task meaningfulness and self-determination related to the work-role” (Spreitzer, 1995 p.1443). Empowering circumstances which provide the prospects for being independent, pose a challenge, and give accountability make people appreciate what they have. In exchange, such appreciation leads to a sense of significance, proficiency, self-determination, and power (Liden et al., 2000).

In the tourism context, when the inhabitants experience psychological empowerment they feel “pride” and “self-esteem” because they feel unique and think they have significant abilities and products to provide the tourists (Di Castri, 2004). Studies indicate that when citizens are not only involved but also empowered, their impact becomes much higher and leads to more sustainable effort (Cole, 2006; Petric, 2007; Scheyvens, 1999).

Cole (2006) makes the distinction between mere involvement and empowerment and argues that empowerment is the “top end of the participation ladder where members of a community are active agents of change and they have the ability to find solutions to their problems, make decisions, implement actions and evaluate their solutions” (Cole, 2006, p.631). Community-based eco-tourism where citizens are actively empowered socially, politically and psychologically is a key element of sustainable tourism (Scheyvens, 1999).

Under normal circumstances, the relationship between the incremental mindset and flourishing is expected to be positive (Helliwell, 2006). However, people with the incremental mindset who are restricted and thus disappointed by the conditions of the country they live in, when they repeatedly experience that in spite of their enthusiasm and efforts they cannot introduce the change that they believe could have been possible, and feel unappreciated, they will not see themselves as valuable and useful (Deci, E. L., & Ryan, 1985). Among the individuals with a higher level of incremental mindset who believe that people and situations are not fixed but changeable, the constraints will lead to a feeling of unfulfilled potential.

However, we believe that women with higher levels of incremental mindset will indeed experience greater flourishing if they are psychologically empowered through tourism. If there are community-based tourism activities in the regions where they live and if these people are involved in and empowered through these tourism activities, they will feel useful and experience meaning in what they do (Cole, 2006).

Often, the community-based tourism is supported by training and development and educational activities that contribute to empowerment. When women feel proud of themselves as they receive positive feedback from the tourists who appreciate their products, services and their environment, the women entrepreneurs feel more competent, powerful to make decisions, and feel that they are useful and effective for their family and their community (Scheyvens, 1999).

Women with incremental mindset, who do not perceive or experience psychological empowerment, know that they are capable of doing the things they want but as a result of environmental pressures and obstacles they cannot. They cannot offer the services and products they want to offer freely to tourists when they are blocked by the people around them such as their husband, father or neighbors, or restricted by the dominant norms of their community. Women with incremental mindset would even feel worse if they are accused of neglecting the household chores that they are expected to do and have to take permission from their husbands (Deci, E. L., & Ryan, 1985).

#### **2.2.4 Implicit Person Theories**

Carol Dweck, a well-known writer in the field of motivation, popularized the concept of "mindset" to demonstrate that the general beliefs that we have about whether characteristics of people are stable or malleable – our lay theories, will influence our

attitudes and behaviors. Dweck (1986) proposed that mindsets can be classified as fixed and incremental (C. S. Dweck, 1986).

People who have fixed mindsets believe that people's personal traits, such as knowledge, inventiveness, and ability, are foreordained and stable characteristics (Kam, C., Risavy, S. D., Perunovic, E., & Plant, 2014). Individuals with fixed mindsets accept that if a person is insufficient in some way, their situation will continue.

On the other hand, people who have an incremental mindset trust that people's fundamental capacities can continue to improve through hard work and commitment. They believe that these natural traits are the beginning stages for achieving accomplishments through learning, hard work and endurance. These assumptions or beliefs are also labelled as our Implicit Person Theory (IPT), a particular presumption about the adaptability of a person's qualities that affect his or her conduct (C. S. Dweck, 1986; Heslin, P. A., & VandeWalle, 2011).

Dweck and her colleagues have focused on implicit person theories (Dweck, C. S., & Leggett, 1988; Dweck, C. S., & Molden, 2005). A person who possesses a fixed "implicit person theory" will have fixed outlook about people— also called entity theorist—trusts that people's capacities are based on their fundamental abilities and are stable (B. C. S. Dweck, 2006).

This leads them to think that these capacities are the reason for their level of success or failure. Such individuals are more likely to believe that their outcomes are due to their unchanging dispositional capacities and ignore situational factors (Levontin, L.,



Halperin, E., & Dweck, 2013). For example, if a pupil with a fixed attitude gets poor scores, he will, in all likelihood, consider it to be something systematic and will continue accepting that it is possible that he is not clever or sufficiently astute or that he is simply worthy of low evaluations.

On the other hand, a person who believes in an incremental or growth “implicit person theory” thinks that although there are singular differences regarding essential abilities or traits, fundamental qualities can indeed be altered.

Previous studies have demonstrated the links between personality traits, well-being and flourishing (DeNeve & Cooper, 1998). Helliwell (2006) found a direct connection between identity and well-being (Helliwell, 2006). Individuals with higher self-respect appear to be less inclined to experience despair. Moreover, a significant number of subscales of the General Health Questionnaire, which could be translated as identity factors such as self-esteem, relate to life fulfillment (Ferrer-i-Carbonell & Gowdy, 2007). Hmieleski and Sheppard (2019) discussed that the women entrepreneurs who are creative, experience higher degrees of well-being and start-up business success (Hmieleski & Sheppard, 2019).

However, Self Determination Theory says that, individuals from all societies require essential psychological necessities for autonomy, capability and relatedness. If these necessities are bolstered by social settings, flourishing is enhanced. If cultural context and other external environmental factors put some restrictions and blockage on those necessities, the level of flourishing declines (Deci, E. L., & Ryan, 1985; Ryan, R. M., & Deci, 2000).

Our research is conducted in North Cyprus, where gender inequality and frozen conflict play an important role since these factors place restrictions on women. Therefore, we expect to have a negative relationship between incremental mindset and the level of flourishing as a result of these restrictions. When women entrepreneurs believe in themselves and want to take actions for their lives, but they are restricted as a result of these external factors, their flourishing level will be lessened compared to those women who may already be convinced that change is not possible and accept their fate.

### **2.2.5 Flourishing**

Subjective wellbeing refers to how individuals encounter the circumstances of their lives and incorporates both sentimental responses and intellectual acumen (Diener, 1984). Psychologists have characterized happiness as a mix of life fulfillment and the relative recurrence of positive and negative affect. Subjective wellbeing, in this manner, incorporates mindsets, feelings and assessments of one's fulfillment regarding both general and particular ranges of one's life (Diener et al., 1999).

Approaches that include well-being incorporate favorable and unfavorable influences, joy, and life fulfillment. Constructive brain research is especially concerned with the investigation of flourishing (Diener, 2000). Subjective wellbeing has a tendency to be steady over time and is firmly identified with identity traits (Steel et al., 2008).

Descriptions of wellbeing, in this way, concentrate on how humans assess their own lives, counting emotional encounters between joy and suffering because of particular occasions and intellectual assessments of what human beings considers a decent life (Diener, 2000). Elements of well-being are identified as influencing positive affect,

which means encountering positive feelings and temperaments, and negative affect which means encountering disagreeable, troubling feelings and states of mind, as well as influencing overall affect, which is characterized as the general harmony of both kinds of affect and is typically evaluated by the distinction between the two (Witter et al., 1984).

Life satisfaction, which is the judgment of one's life and fulfillment with particular life areas such as work fulfillment, are viewed as cognitive segments of well-being (Diener, 2000). The expression of happiness is generally utilized with respect to well-being and has been characterized differently as the "fulfillment of aspirations and objectives", and thus identified with life fulfillment, and as a "dominance of favorable over unfavorable effect[s]" (Diener, 1984). Happiness has also been described as "contentment" (Graham, 2014) and as a "steady, idealistic mind-set state" (Steel et al., 2008) and may also suggest an assessment of a human's whole life in sum (DeNeve & Cooper, 1998).

Life fulfillment can likewise be known as the "steady" segment in one's life (Diener, 1984). Affective ideas of well-being can be considered in terms of transient passionate states and also longer-term inclinations and propensities (Diener et al., 1999). Life fulfillment and, in some studies, joy are normally viewed over long spans of time, even over a person's entire life (Steel et al., 2008). "Personal satisfaction" has likewise been considered as a conceptualization of well-being. Despite the fact that the correct definition of personal satisfaction shifts, it is typically measured as an accumulation of prosperity over a few life areas and may incorporate both biased and unbiased components.

The concept of well-being can be defined as a multi-dimensional condition that considers hedonic – experience of pleasure - and eudaimonic - the experience of meaning or accomplishment - ideas of prosperity. To put in another way, a life which is rich in both hedonic and eudemonic aspects, lead to rich the maximum level of well-being (Huta, V., & Ryan, 2010).

Therefore, the word flourishing refers to combined feelings of accomplishment which are higher order (eudaimonic) experiences and feelings of pleasure which are lower order (hedonic) experiences. When we experience personal achievement, meaningful creative contribution, altruistic experiences, these will not only count as eudimonic experiences but also provide hedonic pleasure.

Evaluating the flourishing levels of individuals is important because findings prove that flourishing is essential for societies and organizations (Howell, 2009). In a similar manner to using accounting to understand the financial health of organizations and countries, we are seeing more interest in taking measurements of well-being to understand their emotional health. Policy makers are becoming more interested in developing policies that will enhance the well-being of societies in a more balanced way. Studies show that flourishing also brings benefits for the community in terms of improved public health (Howell, 2009; Keyes, 2010).

Vanderweele (2017) and (VanderWeele et al., 2019) indicate that flourishing is not limited to improved psychological well-being but also includes every facet of an individual's life. Therefore, different areas of flourishing have been studied. Feeling happy and fulfilled, psychological and physical health, desires and ambitions, personality and honor, and social interactions can be listed as the different areas of

flourishing. Furthermore, economic stability is also an important element in preserving flourishing.

### **2.2.6 Self Determination Theory**

Self-determination theory (SDT) is a macro-theory of human inspiration, identity advancement, and well-being. The theory concentrates particularly on willingly or self-determined conduct and the social and social circumstances which support it.

Self-governance, capability and relatedness are the fundamental mental needs as indicated by Deci, E. L., & Ryan (1985) and they contend that these requirements give or decrease motivation in a wide scope of settings. High quality motivation is reliant on having independence, ability and relatedness when the motivations of workers, sportsmen or students (Deci, E. L., & Ryan, 1985). Motivation can be categorized as intrinsic and extrinsic (Ryan, R. M., & Deci, 2018). Intrinsic motivation incorporates having the option to pick and feeling prizes from the work itself.

SDT additionally hypothesizes an arrangement of fundamental and all-inclusive psychological requirements, in particular those for self-sufficiency, proficiency and congruity, the satisfaction of which is viewed as fundamental and basic to key, vigorous person despite of the culture or phase of growth. Ryan & Deci, (2001) keep up that prosperity is not best caught by hedonic originations of "bliss" alone. Rather, SDT likewise utilizes the idea of well-being, or prosperity characterized as indispensable, as a reciprocal approach. Lastly, since autonomy is encouraged by thoughtful mindfulness, SDT underlines the aspect of mindfulness in controlling one self and well-being.

Self Determination Theory (SDT) is a comprehensive theory of motivation that encompasses several sub-theories. A distinction is made between autonomous motivations; feelings tempted to do something because we find it interesting, or perceive it as our own wish versus controlled motivation, feeling that something must be done because of some pressure or to satisfy someone else. However, SDT does not treat controlled and autonomous motivation as dichotomous but accepts that they represent the theoretical maximum points of a continuum. As the level of autonomy increases, the type of motivation changes from controlled to autonomous.

SDT encompasses the Basic Psychological Needs theory which states that autonomy, competence, relatedness, psychological needs and must be met (Deci, E. L., & Ryan, 1985). Thus, women entrepreneurs need autonomy and freedom to decide and act independently, competence to be able to perform effectively and deal with financial, operational and managerial issues, and relatedness to find support from their contacts.

The Cognitive Evaluation Theory as a sub-theory of SDT argues that the context may be supportive or controlling. A controlling context would use external conditional rewards or penalties, which for individuals already performing the task and getting intrinsic rewards from the task itself would mean a loss of autonomy. For example, in a non-profit organization where presumably people were engaged in their tasks due to the alignment of their personal values and goals with the organization, after the introduction of merit pay systems, a loss of autonomy and intrinsic motivation was experienced (Gagne & Deci, 2005).

For entrepreneurs that went into business with a desire to use their creativity and innovation, when an environment places too many external conditions to satisfy, this can lead to frustration. Women entrepreneurs will experience this when they are operating under pressure from society to conform to certain norms that restrict their autonomy, competence and relatedness.

The Causality Orientation Theory is also a sub-theory of SDT and focuses on the individual differences of general orientation that people have. Those with an autonomy orientation have a higher need for autonomy and those with a control orientation will be more comfortable with having externally imposed deadlines and clear rules.

When the social context supports autonomy, and the individual has an autonomy orientation this will increase motivation (Gagne & Deci, 2005). Conversely, we may expect that if the context is controlling and the individual has an autonomy orientation, this may result in loss of motivation.

When women feel proud of themselves as they receive positive feedback from the tourists who appreciate their products, services, and their environment, the women entrepreneurs feel more competent, powerful to make decisions and feel that they are useful and effective for their family and their community (Scheyvens, 1999).

The basic needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness that are necessary for motivation and wellbeing according to SDT are more likely to be satisfied when women ecotourism entrepreneurs are empowered through effectively designed and implemented developmental and supportive programs. We expect that improving

women's empowerment will enhance their level of self-determination and lead to an increase in their subjective well-being.

### **2.2.7 Cyprus as a Frozen Conflict Area**

As a small island in the Mediterranean Sea, Cyprus has been ruled by many civilizations. Before its independence, the island was ruled by the Ottomans from 1571 until 1870. Britain obtained effective control of the island starting in 1870, and in 1925, the island became a British colony through the Lausanne treaty. Starting in 1955, with the leadership of the EOKA (Greek Cypriot Fighter Organization), Greek Cypriots initiated an uprising against Britain with the aim of Enosis—the Greek annexation of the island.

The uprising against British rule in Cyprus, followed by a conflict between the two communities on the island, Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, made a solution inevitable. The solution for the inter-communal conflicts on the island was found by the creation of the Republic of Cyprus. The Republic of Cyprus was established in 1960 after long and laborious arrangements, for the most part between the two countries of Greece and Turkey.

The solution aimed to achieve a trade-off between the two ethnic populaces of Cyprus in the wake of British colonial rule and created a balance between Turkey and Greece by giving the guaranty of rights to Britain, Turkey and Greece. The 1959 London and Zurich Agreements were global settlements that prompted the founding of the Republic of Cyprus. This republic was a power-sharing government. The structure of the republic mirrored a fragile arrangement of power sharing between the two populaces of the island, which showed itself in the official, legal and authoritative aspects of the democratic state (Stavrinides, 1976).



Before the end of 1963, the republic had fallen apart, as two local native groups, the Greek and Turkish Cypriots, could not collaborate. The disputes and conflicts between the two parties started during the 1950s in the wake of discussions over the future political structure of the island after English colonial rule ended and the British withdrew from the island. These conflicts emerged in outbursts between 1963 and 1967 and finally finished in 1974 with a military coup, planned and organized by Greece to unite Cyprus with the Greece, a plan known as Enosis. To prevent this unification and protect the rights and lives of the Turkish population, Turkey sent troops to Cyprus.

Currently, the two populations that helped establish the 1960 Republic of Cyprus live separately in two regions. Greek Cypriots have ruled the entire Republic of Cyprus since 1963, and the republic is recognized globally and keeps up a seat in the UN General Assembly as an independent state. The other benefactors of the 1960 Republic, the Turkish Cypriots, have been living under a Turkish Cypriot authority since 1963. Since 1983, the Turkish Cypriots have been living under the flag of their self-announced Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), which remains unrecognized by the world, as it is universally perceived as just being part of Turkey.

While the two societies have built up their particular independent administrations in their separate states since 1968, the two sides' representatives have intermittently come together under the supervision of the United Nations to try to reach an agreement on a permanent and thorough solution for ongoing issues on Cyprus.

The situation in Cyprus is categorized and accepted as being a frozen conflict state, as there has been an ongoing conflict between the recognized Republic of Cyprus

and the unrecognized Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. As the negotiations have continued for more than 40 years, in the meantime, Turkish Cypriots continue to live in an unrecognized country, faced with the consequences of a frozen conflict.

Table 1. Gender Gap in Turkey according to the Global Gap Index Report 2020

<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Rank</b>
Economic participation and opportunity	136/153
Educational attainment	113/153
Health and survival	64/153
Political empowerment	109/153
Global Gender Gap Index	130/153

Due to these conditions, since 1974, Northern Cyprus has been mainly supported and influenced by Turkey; therefore, Turkish culture and traditions have been mainly spread to the area. According to the Gender Gap Report (2020) published by the World Economic Forum, Turkey is ranked 130 out of 153 countries as shown in Table 1 (Global Gender Gap Report 2020, 2020). This shows a clear gender inequality in the country and hence in Northern Cyprus as well.

In 2016 and 2017, research was conducted in Cyprus by the “Security Dialog Initiative”, which is a nongovernment organization, together with the Gender Score Cyprus Project, by implementing the Social Cohesion and Reconciliation (SCORE) index to determine the state of gender inequality in Northern Cyprus. The findings confirmed that the Turkish Cypriot Society is affected by a traditional culture where toxic masculinity is endorsed. According to this study, husbands’ disciplinary actions towards their wives are backed by society. Also, the society reduces the role of women to only parenthood.

The study shows that Turkish Cypriot women cannot freely express themselves in society; they feel that they are disadvantaged with regard to sharing family wealth, and they illustrate lower levels of economic and political independence. Powerful traditional gender roles lead the society to expect women to be responsible for household duties and child care. As a result of this work overload, women have very limited or no time to invest in themselves to improve their skills, have a hobby, or join society and become involved in political activities.

In addition to these findings, the most dramatic outcome of the study is that there is neither an awareness of gender inequality nor understanding about the concept of gender equality. Both men and women in society accept gender inequality situations as norms and do not attempt to make any changes (Gender Score Cyprus Project, 2018).

Although the political problems thwart the possibility to have a solution in Cyprus, people try to build a life where they satisfy their needs and try to achieve their dreams. Like anywhere else, some choose to become entrepreneurs. Specially, women who live in rural areas, where the job opportunities are limited, want to feel independent and empowered through entrepreneurship.

Small to medium size businesses make up 95% of the private sector in North Cyprus (Tanova, 2003). Furthermore, 80% of these businesses are sole proprietorship or family businesses (Güven Lisaniler, 2004). According to a study, the appeal of working in the government sector, the limited availability of information coupled with political and economic barriers diminish the push factors for entrepreneurship as a career alternative (Güven Lisaniler, 2004).

However, the amount of women entrepreneurs in North Cyprus can be considered high according to the EU standards (Howells, K. & Krivokapic-Skoko, 2010). Although the push factors are not strong, people, mainly women who cannot find a governmental job, are pulled into entrepreneurship. Main reason for that is to be more social and to earn their own money to become self-sufficient (Howells, K. & Krivokapic-Skoko, 2010).

At that point, ecotourism plays an important role in empowering those women entrepreneurs, as Cyprus offers historical and natural beauty to offer to the tourists. Tourism activities are limited and very difficult due to the state of frozen conflict. Economic and political embargoes, such as lack of direct flights and being excluded from international organizations, cause problems and limit the opportunities.

These limitations and uncertainty put constraints on the entrepreneurs psychologically. Those who have incremental mindset believe in change and believe they can achieve their dreams, also know and see the reality of the country they live in. This awareness leads them to feel less flourished as they feel constrained.

In addition to above mentioned economic and political constraints, as Purrini, (2011) mentioned, women who live in these conflict zones, particularly in the rural regions, should be empowered as they cannot take part of the decision making process. Women entrepreneurs should be supported and encouraged with training and financial support because finding finance is a further major obstacle they face (Ramadani et al. 2015).

## **2.3 Hypotheses**

In this chapter research hypotheses are developed based on self determination theory, implicit person theories as well as relevant literature and empirical studies in the field. The conceptual model of this thesis is illustrated the relationship between growth mindset and flourishing of women ecotourism entrepreneurs. Psychological empowerment is also tested as moderation between the relationship between growth mindset and flourishing.

## **2.4 Research Hypotheses**

### **2.4.1 Growth mindset and Flourishing**

Previous studies have demonstrated the links between personality traits, well-being and flourishing (DeNeve & Cooper, 1998). Helliwell (Helliwell, 2006) found a direct connection between identity and well-being. Individuals with higher self-respect appear to be less inclined to experience despair. Hmieleski & Sheppard, (2019) argued that women entrepreneurs who are creative experience higher degrees of well-being and start-up business success.

However, the self-determination theory says that individuals from all societies have an essential psychological need for autonomy, capability and relatedness. If these needs are bolstered by social settings, flourishing is enhanced. On the other hand, if the cultural context and other external environmental factors put restrictions and blockages on these needs, the level of flourishing declines (Deci, E. L., & Ryan, 1985; Gagne & Deci, 2005; Ryan, R. M., & Deci, 2000).

Our research was conducted in Northern Cyprus, where gender inequality and frozen conflict play an important role, since these factors place restrictions on women.

Therefore, we anticipate a negative relationship between growth mindset and the level of flourishing as a result of these restrictions. When women entrepreneurs believe in themselves and want to take actions for their lives, but are restricted as a result of these external factors, their flourishing level will be lessened compared to that of women who may already be convinced that change is not possible and accept their fate.

Therefore, based on the self-determination theory, we expect to see a negative impact of growth mindset on flourishing. We expect that people with growth mindset will think they can change things and achieve the things they want. However, in the context of Northern Cyprus, where they cannot make a change and achieve their goals due to the contextual limitations they face, they will be more frustrated and will experience less flourishing. Therefore, we developed our first hypothesis as follows:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Growth mindset has a negative relationship with flourishing.

#### **2.4.2 Psychological Empowerment, Growth Mindset and Flourishing**

Elias, J., & Ferguson, (2007) define empowerment as the right of people to make individual choices, make their decisions on their own and have dignity. Researchers argue that the process of empowerment aims to enable individuals to obtain more power to become more self-reliant and self-confident people, to create their own way of living and, therefore, to become part of the process of social change (Bystydzienski, 1992).

According to Spreitzer (Spreitzer, 1995 p.1443), “psychological empowerment refers to the intrinsic task motivation that results in feelings of competence, impact, task meaningfulness and self-determination related to the work-role”. Empowering circumstances which provide the prospects for being independent pose a challenge,

enhance accountability and make people appreciate what they have. In exchange, such appreciation leads to a sense of significance, proficiency, self-determination and power (Spreitzer, 1995).

In the tourism context, when the inhabitants experience psychological empowerment they feel “pride” and “self-esteem”, as they feel unique and think they have significant abilities and products to give to tourists (Di Castri, 2004). Studies indicate that when citizens are not only involved but also empowered, their impact becomes much greater and leads to more sustainable efforts (Cole, 2006; Petric, 2007; Scheyvens, 1999) makes the distinction between mere involvement and empowerment and argues that empowerment is the “top end of the participation ladder where members of a community are active agents of change and they have the ability to find solutions to their problems, make decisions, implement actions and evaluate their solutions” (Cole, 2006 p. 631). Community-based ecotourism where citizens are actively empowered socially, politically and psychologically is a key element of sustainable tourism (Scheyvens, 1999).

Under normal circumstances, the relationship between the growth mindset and flourishing is expected to be positive (Helliwell, 2006). However, people with a growth mindset who are restricted and thus disappointed by the conditions of the country they live in, when they repeatedly experience that in spite of their enthusiasm and efforts they cannot introduce the change that they believe could have been possible, and feel unappreciated, will not see themselves as valuable and useful (Deci, E. L., & Ryan, 1985). Among the individuals with a higher level of growth mindset who believe that people and situations are not fixed but changeable, the constraints will lead to a feeling of unfulfilled potential.

However, we believe that women with higher levels of growth mindset will indeed experience greater flourishing if they are psychologically empowered through tourism. If there are community-based tourism activities in the regions where they live and if they are involved in, and empowered by, these sustainable tourism activities, they will feel useful and experience meaning in what they do (Cole, 2006). Often, community-based tourism is supported by training and development and educational activities that contribute to empowerment.

When women feel proud of themselves as they receive positive feedback from the tourists who appreciate their products, services and environment, they feel more competent, empowered to make decisions, useful and effective in their family and their community (Scheyvens, 1999). Women with a growth mindset who do not perceive or experience psychological empowerment know that they are capable of doing the things they want but, as a result of environmental pressures and obstacles, cannot. They cannot offer the services and products they want to offer freely to tourists when they are blocked by the people around them, such as their husband, father or neighbors, or restricted by the dominant norms of their community. Women with a growth mindset will feel even worse if they are accused of neglecting the household chores that they are expected to perform and have to ask permission to their husbands (Deci, E. L., & Ryan, 1985).

Based on the self-determination theory, we expect that maintaining women's empowerment will enhance their level of self-determination and lead to an increase in their subjective well-being. We believe that this relationship will be particularly stronger among the women entrepreneurs who have higher levels of growth mindset.



Therefore, we expect to find a moderation effect of psychological empowerment that reverses the negative relationship between growth mindset and flourishing. As a result of this expectation, we developed our second hypothesis as follows:

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Psychological empowerment interacts with the relationship between growth mindset and flourishing.

## 2.5 Conceptual Model

This research applied a cross-sectional survey and regression analysis to assess how psychological empowerment through tourism interacts with the relationship between growth mindset and the level of flourishing of women entrepreneurs living in rural regions of Northern Cyprus.

Figure 1 shows the conceptual model and the hypotheses of this study. This model tests the effect of growth mindset on the flourishing of women entrepreneurs who live in rural parts of Northern Cyprus and engage in ecotourism activities (Hypothesis 1). The study also tested whether psychological empowerment through tourism interacts with the relationship between self-growth mindset and flourishing (Hypothesis 2).

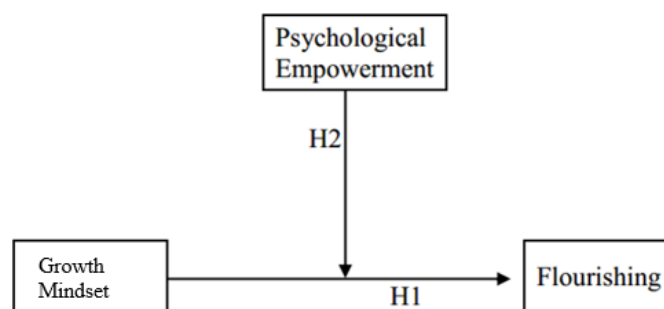


Figure 1. Conceptual Model

## **2.6 Methodology**

This chapter provides information on the methodology of the study. Issues regarding sample specifics, data collection's procedure and context of the study are discussed. Likewise, information about development of questionnaires and measures are provided. Finally, an outline of data analysis procedure is presented at the end of this chapter.

### **2.6.1 Sample and Procedure**

By following the suggestion of Hinkin, (1998), we applied a pilot study with 12 women entrepreneurs to test items on a small scale before we applied the survey on a larger scale. First, after the pilot study, to evaluate the substance and legitimacy of the scale items, some phrasing was corrected, as some of the words were found to be reasonably confusing, as suggested by DeVellis, (2012). Essential modifications were made, and equivocal words were reworded.

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) which can be seen in Table 2, was applied using Varimax Rotation to find conceptually incompatible items with a correlation threshold of 0.40 as suggested by Kim, J., & Mueller, (1978). Analyses illustrated 3 factors that cumulatively clarify 63% of the deviation, with eigenvalues above 1. We ensured the reliability and validity of the empirical model used in the study. The threshold Cronbach's alpha (Nunnally, J. C., & Bernstein, 1994) needs to be higher than 0.7, and for the current study, all the constructs have alpha values greater than 0.7. One item from the flourishing scale had a loading below 0.50 and was eliminated as recommended by Hair et al. (1998) and DeVellis (2012).

Table 2. Exploratory Factor Analysis

	Factor			Uniqueness
	1 (Mindset)	2 (Flourishing)	3 (Empowerment)	
purposeful life		0.541		0.687
interested and engaged in daily activities		0.586		0.637
competent in activities important to me		0.810		0.306
good person good life		0.794		0.299
optimistic about my future		0.526		0.704
people respect me		0.765		0.357
people can change their basic characteristics			0.821	0.308
people can change the kind of person they are			0.887	0.172
no matter what kind of person, people can change			0.858	0.232
even most basic qualities can change			0.792	0.334
proud to be a resident of ...	0.798			0.334
feel special because people travel to see...	0.764			0.312
want to tell others about what we have...	0.719			0.412
reminds me of my unique culture to share	0.871			0.215
makes me want to keep my village special	0.849			0.231

Note: 'Maximum likelihood' extraction method was used in combination with a 'varimax' rotation

## Summary

Factor	SS Loadings	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	3.42	22.8	22.8
2	3.07	20.4	43.3
3	2.97	19.8	63.1

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), as indicated by Hinkin (1998), should be directed to evaluate the goodness of fit of the model and the items used in the model. The results of the CFA can be seen in Table 3. The high loadings in the EFA examination demonstrate that the study has construct validity, but we need to support this finding by having good results for average variance extracted (AVE) and composite reliability (CR) to assure internal consistency and illustrate the convergent and discriminant validity of the study. The AVE, CR values are provided in the Results section.

Table 3. Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Factor	Indicator	Estimate	SE	Z	p	
Flourishing	FS1	purposeful life	0.681	0.0841	8.09	< .001
	FS3	interested and engaged in daily activities	0.793	0.0897	8.84	< .001
		competent in activities important to me				< .001
	FS5	good person good life	0.751	0.0552	13.62	< .001
	FS6	optimistic about my future	0.704	0.0503	14.01	< .001
	FS7	people respect me	0.768	0.0997	7.7	< .001
	FS8	people can change their basic characteristics	0.905	0.0694	13.04	< .001
	Mindset	IMS1	people can change the kind of person they are	1.244	0.0887	14.02
IMS2		no matter what kind of person, people can change	1.235	0.077	16.03	< .001
IMS3		even most basic qualities can change	1.285	0.0843	15.23	< .001
IMS4			1.063	0.0787	13.51	< .001
Empowerment	RETSP1	proud to be a resident of ...	0.689	0.0501	13.75	< .001
	RETSP	feel special because people travel to	0.736	0.0528	13.93	< .001

2	see...				1
RETSP	want to tell others about what we				< .00
3	have...	0.651	0.0521	12.51	1
RETSP	reminds me of my unique culture to				< .00
4	share	0.745	0.0496	15.03	1
RETSP	makes me want to keep my village				< .00
5	special	0.784	0.0527	14.88	1

### 2.6.2 Data Collection Procedure

The purposive sampling method was used. A list of sample populations was obtained from the Businesswomen Association of Northern Cyprus. The list consisted of 305 women entrepreneurs who were involved in ecotourism activities, such as traditional handcrafting, producing traditional food. The population also includes boutique hotel or guesthouse owners and small restaurant owners who specialize in traditional foods. These women live in rural areas, mainly in small towns within five main regions of Northern Cyprus. Most of them were housewives before they became entrepreneurs.

In each region, there is a mentor who helps these women in their operations. Mainly, the mentors are the leaders of local women's associations or in some regions, mayors who are taking on the responsibility of leading ecotourism activities in their region and providing support to entrepreneurs. We visited these towns to meet these women in person.

The list we used was not particularly applicable, as most of the women were no longer engaged in these activities and some of them were unreachable. Therefore, we found a woman entrepreneur from each town and through her, using the snowball technique, reached out to other women.

We contacted 200 women and asked them to complete the questionnaire. Data were collected in the period between April and June 2018 by visiting the women and in their respective locations. During the distribution of the questionnaires, after explaining our research purposes and how we would maintain their confidentiality, we kindly requested that the women entrepreneurs complete the questionnaires. The questionnaires consisted of four sections including a demographic information part, mindsets, and women's psychological empowerment through tourism and flourishing.

### **2.6.3 Development of Questionnaires and Measures**

#### **2.6.3.1 Back Translation, Face Validity and Pilot Study**

To measure flourishing, the Turkish version of the Flourishing Scale which had been adapted by Telef, (2001) was used in our study. To assess the psychological empowerment and incremental mindsets of women entrepreneurs, the original scales were translated into Turkish and then translated back into English by two different professional translators. They were compared with the original scales in order to check that the meanings of the items are correctly translated into Turkish would not be misinterpreted by the respondents. This process was performed according to the suggestions of Perrewé et al., (2002). Before distributing the questionnaires, a pilot study was completed to test that the questionnaires worked correctly. While preparing and distributing the questionnaires, the suggestions of Podsakoff et al., (2003) were applied to protect our study from common method bias.

#### **2.6.3.2 Measures**

##### **Incremental Mindset**

Incremental mindset was assessed with an 8-item implicit person theory created by (Levy et al., 1998). This scale has four items that are associated with fixed mindset

like “As much as I hate to admit it, you can’t teach an old dog new trick. People can’t really change their deepest attributes” and four items that are associated with incremental mindset like “People can always substantially change the kind of person they are”. Respondents were asked to rate the items using a Likert scale ranging from 1 - strongly disagree and 6 - strongly agree. The previous research demonstrated the coefficient alpha of this scale as 0.94, which shows the validity and strong internal consistency of the scale (Levy et al., 1998). We found the alpha coefficient of this scale to be 0.889 in our study, which illustrates the validity and strong internal consistency of the scale.

### **Flourishing Scale**

This scale consists of 8 items that evaluate respondents’ perceived success in major segments of their lives, for example, their self-esteem or how competent they feel or if they think they have a purpose in life. Initially, this scale was named the “Psychological Well-being Scale”, but later, the name of the scale was changed to the “Flourishing Scale” to represent the content of the scale more accurately. The scale provides a single psychological well-being score (Diener et al. 2010a). The respondents were asked to rate answers on a 7-point Likert scale where 1 represents Strongly Disagree and 7 represents Strongly Agree. One example item is “I lead a purposeful and meaningful life.” It is illustrated that the scale showed validity and reliability (Diener et al. 2010a). The Turkish version of the scale was also tested and demonstrated as a valid and reliable scale. The coefficient alpha was found to be 0.80 (Telef, 2001). When we applied this scale in our study, we also found a coefficient alpha value of 0.825, which indicates that it is a valid and reliable scale.

## Psychological Empowerment

Resident Empowerment through Tourism Scale (RETS) was used to assess psychological empowerment of women entrepreneurs engaging in ecotourism activities, as it is a reliable and valid measurement tool that assess resident perceptions of empowerment (Boley & McGehee, 2014a). The scale has 3 sections to assess psychological, political and social empowerment of residents through tourism. We have used the five items in the psychological empowerment subscale, consisting of statements such as “Tourism in ... reminds me that I have a unique culture to share with visitors.”, “Tourism in ... makes me proud to be a...resident.” The value of the coefficient alpha was 0.918 for this scale, which represents strong construct reliability.

## 2.7 Data Analysis

We applied confirmatory factor analyses using the AMOS software to examine the goodness of fit of our study model. The findings are illustrated in Table 1. The fit indicators show figures that are accepted as good fit indications according to the thresholds shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Goodness of fit of the model.

N = 200	Cut-Off Points
$\chi^2 = 759$	
df = 199, $p = 0.000$	
GFI = 0.863	1 = maximum fit (Tanaka & Huba, 1985)
NFI = 0.861	1 = maximum fit (Bentler & Bonett, 1980)
CFI = 0.91	1 = maximum fit (McDonald & Marsh, 1990)
RMSEA = 0.087	<0.08 = good fit (Browne & Cudeck, 1993)
$C_{MIN}/df = 2.523$	>1 and <5 = good fit (Marsh & Hocevar, 1985)
VIF = 1.010	< 3 = good fit (Hair et al., 2018)

Notes: GFI: Goodness of fit indices, NFI: Normed fit index, CFI: Comparative Fit Index, RMSEA: Root Mean Square Error of Approximation,  $C_{MIN}/df$ , relative  $\chi^2$ .



All items show high loadings in their underlying variables. Table 1 shows that the Cronbach's alpha figures are greater than the threshold of 0.70 (Nunnally, J. C., & Bernstein, 1994) and that CRs are greater than the accepted level of 0.70 (Hair et al. 1998). Average Variance Extracted (AVE) figures are also greater than the cut-off figure of 0.50 (Hair et al. 2006).

The figures obtained from the analyses, which are shown in Tables 4 and 5, show proof of convergent and discriminant validity. The potential risk of common method bias was handled utilizing an analytical methodology. Harman's single-factor test explained 32.25% of the variance; therefore, the possible danger of common method bias appears to have been reduced (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

The model fit indices were adequate with Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) at 0.087 and Normed Fit Index (NFI) at 0.86. Discriminant validity was assessed using Fornell & Larcker, (1981) method of comparing AVE's to the item correlations within each construct. We also checked the hetotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio of the correlations and found the values were well below the recommended threshold of 0.90 (Hair et al., 2019).

The potential risk of common method bias was handled utilizing an analytical methodology. Harman's single-factor test explained 32.25% of the variance; therefore, the possible danger of common method bias appears to have been reduced (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

Additionally, we relied on the method recommended by (Kock, 2015) which argues that when there is common method bias, a spuriously strong coefficient of

association between dependent and independent variables could be observed. We assessed such collinearity by generating variance inflation factors for all latent variables and checking to ensure they were below 3.3 thresholds.

## 2.8 Results

In this chapter empirical findings are presented. Demographic profile of the participants is demonstrated. Next, results of confirmatory factor analysis of the measures are presented to address the scales' reliability and validity. Results of structural equation modelling are presented to test the hypothesized relationships. Finally results of Sobel tests and bootstrapping analysis are presented to underscore the mediating effects.

### 2.8.1 Demographic Results

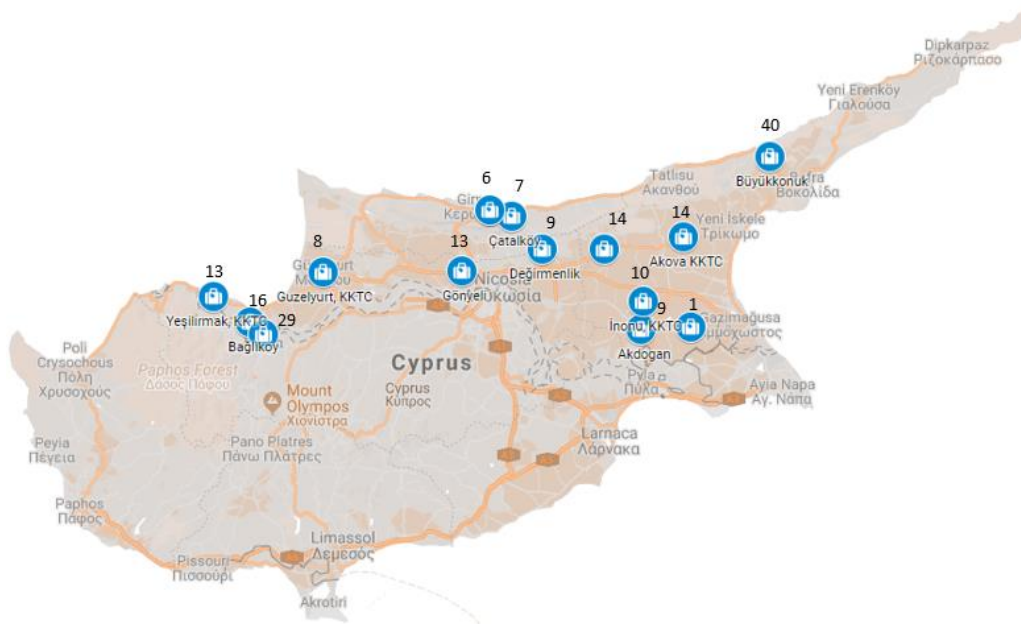


Figure 2. Number of Ecotourism Entrepreneurs Participating in the Study by Region

Figure 2 shows the locations where the data was collected and Table 3 presents demographic profiles of the respondents. The sample consisted of 200 women respondents from 15 villages located in rural parts of Northern Cyprus. In terms of the respondents' ages, 117 of them were over 44 years old, representing 58.5% of the

sample population. Forty (20%) of them were between the ages of 35-44, while 37 (18.5%) of them were between the ages of 25-34.

Only 6 of them, representing 3% of the population, were 25 years old or younger. This means that young women do not show entrepreneurship patterns in the ecotourism sector in Northern Cyprus. Forty-nine respondents, representing 24.5%, were primary school graduates, while 43 (21.5%) were secondary school graduates. Seventy-five women were high school graduates, representing 37.5% of the population. Only 18 (9%) of them had undergraduate degrees, and 15 (7.5%) were postgraduate degree holders.

This information shows that it is mostly uneducated women who have the tendency to operate in ecotourism entrepreneurship activities in rural areas. Of the sample, 159 (79.5%) of them were re married or in a relationship, while the rest were single, divorced or widowed. Ninety-three of the respondents, representing 46.5%, had 2 children, and 52 (26%) had 3 children. Twenty-five (12.5) women had only 1 child, while 20 (10%) had no children. Only 10 of them, representing 5% of the population, had more than 3 children. With regard to years of experience, 112 of them, representing 55.5%, had more than 6 years of experience, 42 (21%) of them had between 4-6 years of experience, and the rest had less than 4 years of experience.

Table 5. Respondents' profile (n=200)

Age	N	%	Years of Experience	N	%	Education	N	%	No. of Children	N	%	Marital Status	N	%
<25	6	3	<1 year	14	7	Primary School Diploma	49	24.5	0	20	10	Single	17	8.5
25–34	37	18.5	1–3 years	32	16	Secondary School Diploma	43	21.5	1	25	12.5	In a relationship	3	1.5
35–44	40	20	4–6 years	42	21	High School Diploma	75	37.5	2	93	46.5	Married	156	78
>44	117	58.5	>6 years	112	55.5	Bachelor's Degree	18	9	3	52	26	Divorced	4	2
						Postgraduate Degree	15	7.5	>3	10	5	Separated	1	0.5
												Widowed	19	9.5
Total	200	100	Total	200	100	Total	200	100	Total	200	100	Total	200	100

## 2.8.2 Item and Latent Variable Statistics

Table 6 shows item loadings to their related latent variables, the Cronbach's Alpha figures greater than the threshold of 0.70 (Nunnally, J. C., & Bernstein, 1994) and CRs greater than the accepted level of 0.70 (Hair et al. 1998). Average Variance Extracted (AVE) figures are also greater than the cut-off figure of 0.50 (Hair et al. 2006).

Table 6. Item loadings, construct reliability and validity

Construct	Item	Loading	Composite Reliability	Cronbach Alpha	AVE
Flourishing			0.89	0.83	0.57
	purposeful life	0.666			
	interested and engaged in daily activities	0.665			
	competent in activities important to me	0.838			
	good person good life	0.851			
	optimistic about my future	0.649			
	people respect me	0.843			
Growth Mindset			0.94	0.92	0.80
	people can change their basic characteristics	0.872			
	people can change the kind of person they are	0.929			
	no matter what kind of person, people can change even most basic qualities can change	0.908			
Psychological Empowerment Through Tourism			0.94	0.92	0.75

proud to be a resident of ...	0.870
feel special because people travel to see...	0.885
want to tell others about what we have...	0.833
reminds me of my unique culture to share	0.879
makes me want to keep my village special	0.872

### 2.8.3 Direct Effects

Table 7 shows the means, standard deviations and correlation estimates of the variables used in our study. As hypothesized, growth mindset and the level of flourishing of women entrepreneurs are negatively related ( $r = -0.223$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This result provides support for Hypothesis 1.

Table 7. Means, SD and correlations of the study variables.

Variables	1	2	3	Mean	SD	CR	$\alpha$	AVE
1. Flourishing	-			6.22	0.82	0,88	0.833	0.51
2. Psychological Empowerment	0.381 **	-		4.53	0.75	0.93	0.919	0.71
3. Growth Mindset	-0.223 **	-0.143 *	-	2.42	1.18	0.91	0.894	0.57

### 2.8.4 Moderation Effects

Table 8 shows that Hypothesis 2, which anticipated that psychological empowerment would moderate the relationship between growth mindset and flourishing, is supported, as we can see a significant level of interaction terms ( $\beta = 0.260$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

Table 8. Flourishing as predicted by Growth Mindset and Psychological

Empowerment.		
Variables:	Step 1	Step 2
	$\beta (t)$	$\beta(t)$
Growth Mindset	-0.171 (-2.620) **	-0.156 (-2.523)
Psychological Empowerment	0.357 (5.449) **	0.235 (3.542) **
Interaction term	-	0.260 (4.996) **
F	20.754	23.838
R <sup>2</sup>	0.174	0.267
$\Delta R^2$	-	0.093**

Note: Interaction terms = Growth mindset x Psychological empowerment level  
 \*\* Significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). \* Significant at the 0.05 (2-tailed).

Figure 3 shows the interaction effect of psychological empowerment in the relationship between growth mindset and flourishing.

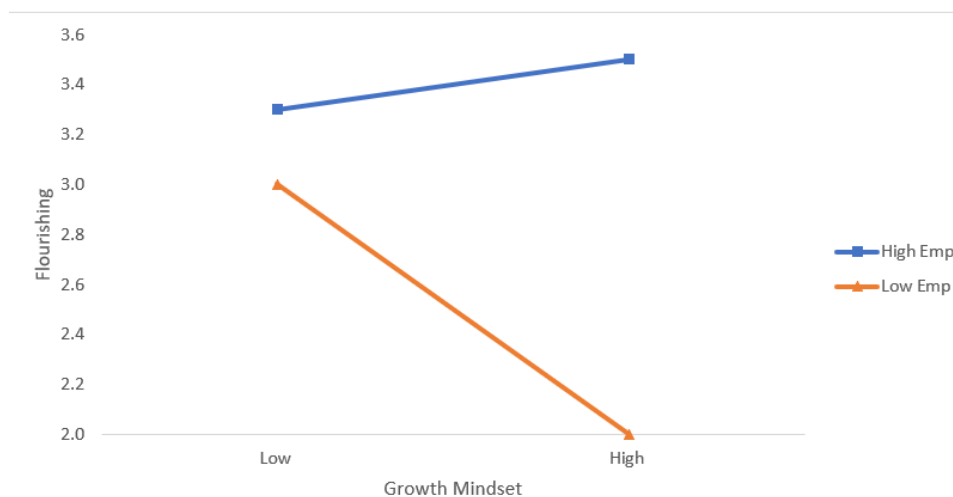


Figure 3. Slopes showing how psychological empowerment interacts in the relationship between growth mindset and flourishing.

Therefore, complete support was reached. The research outcome approved the model of interest, as all hypothesized relationships were supported. Figure 4 shows the interaction effect of psychological empowerment in the relationship between growth mindset and flourishing. As clearly seen in Figure 4, this study proves that when the psychological empowerment is low, women entrepreneurs' level of flourishing declines when their growth mindset level increases.

When we enter a low value of empowerment at 1 standard deviation below its mean, the estimated beta for mindset in predicting flourishing is negative ( $-0.27$ ), whereas when we enter a high value of empowerment at 1 standard deviation above its mean value, the estimated beta for mindset in predicting flourishing is positive ( $0.15$ ). This can be explained by the negative impact of gender inequality and the frozen conflict conditions in Cyprus. Women entrepreneurs are negatively affected when they believe that they can change and improve their skills, but also that they will not accomplish their dreams due to the limitations they face in their community.

However, when we add psychological empowerment to this relationship, the negative result is reversed to a positive one, which shows that if we empower women entrepreneurs psychologically through tourism, they will feel strong and empowered, and this will change the relationship between growth mindset and flourishing. When the women are psychologically empowered, their growth mindset will lead to a more fulfilled, happier life, although there are many constraints that they still have to face.

## **2.9 Discussion And Conclusion**

In this chapter, the empirical results of study are conferred in detail along with theoretical and practical implications of the study for scholars and practitioners. This chapter denotes limitations of current study and finally directions for future research are suggested at the end of this chapter.

### **2.9.1 General Findings**

This study demonstrates that when their growth mindset level increases, the psychological empowerment leads to higher levels of flourishing among women entrepreneurs. If we empower women entrepreneurs psychologically through tourism, they will feel strong and a higher sense of wellbeing especially if they have

a growth mindset. When the women are psychologically empowered this will lead to a more fulfilled, happier life.

On the other hand, among low growth mindset women, we see that the level of increase in flourishing is not very much even as the level of empowerment increases. We believe that this is due to the differences in their expectations and their orientation towards what can be changed and what must be accepted as fate and destiny. The Turkish society indoctrinates the value of not wanting more and being satisfied with the way things are especially for women through written and oral literature (Fielding, 2019) and our results also show that the mean of the level of growth mindset in our sample is lower than the theoretical mean for the scale and the mean from other populations reported in the literature.

However, when there is low empowerment, we see that women entrepreneurs with high growth mindset have lower flourishing levels compared to the women with low growth mindset. Although, studies on mindset demonstrate that those with a growth mindset will have more positive emotional experiences and thus will have higher levels of thriving, flourishing, and fulfillment in general (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Howell, 2016), more recent research has revealed that the positive results of a growth mindset also require supportive contexts in which these positive outcomes can be possible (Yeager et al., 2019).

Thus, this finding may be attributed to the negative impact of gender inequality and the frozen conflict conditions in Cyprus being felt more negatively among growth mindset women compared to those with low growth mindset ones. In line with SDT (Deci, E. L., & Ryan, 1985), the women eco-tourism entrepreneurs need to fulfill



autonomy, competence and relatedness, especially those entrepreneurs with a high growth mindset will have a higher autonomy orientation, but the entrepreneurship ecosystem in North Cyprus is not supportive which results in lower levels of flourishing. Women entrepreneurs are negatively affected when they believe that they can change and can improve their skills but also believe that they will not accomplish their dreams due to the limitations they face in their community.

### **2.9.2 Theoretical Implications**

In the relatively unfavorable entrepreneurial ecosystem and restrictive social context of North Cyprus, empowerment through ecotourism activities can enable especially women with a growth mindset to experience higher levels of wellbeing. Empowering growth mindset women entrepreneurs psychologically improves their autonomy and self-belief which leads them to experience a higher level of flourishing.

This not only benefits the women who become ecotourism entrepreneurs but also the society and the economy overall. There will be a positive impact on the GDP through increased female employment rate as well as the knowledge, skills and capabilities that women gain will contribute to the overall wellbeing of the society. Furthermore, a UNESCO (2019) report shows that empowering women has significant benefits for the environment and argues that when women have a larger role in governance in the society, the sensitivity to social and environmental impacts of policies gain more attention (Global Education Monitoring Report 2019: Migration, Displacement and Education: Building Bridges, Not Walls., 2018).

However, we note that the impact of empowerment through tourism is felt less by those women who have a lower growth mindset or fixed mindset. Those with a fixed mindset are likely to believe that characteristics are generally stable and impossible

to change, therefore they may not be so much concerned or motivated in the first place to introduce change to themselves or their communities.

Thus, they may be less likely to utilize the opportunities introduced by empowerment and their level of wellbeing does not change as much as those with the high growth mindset who feel more confident to chase their dreams and create a change in their life by taking action.

Many scholars and practitioners also believe that it is possible to increase the growth mindset through interventio. Especially in the field of education, there are many applications and recommendations on how teachers can develop a growth mindset amongst their students. For example, use of a metaphor such as “the brain is similar to a muscle that needs to be exercised through learning and grows stronger and smarter as a result of them.” This metaphor is reinforced by the teachers and replaces any belief that our talents, abilities and capacity is fixed and there is nothing we can do about it.

Similarly, Dweck (2006) argues this can be extended to leadership and management, where managers can develop cultures where people have belief in their and other’s ability to change and develop (B. C. S. Dweck, 2006). These cultures would value trial and error as part of the process of development and not penalize individuals for taking initiative to try something new even if it does not always succeed.

### **2.9.3 Practical Implications**

We believe that if women are changed, their surroundings will be changed as well. From this perspective, this study proves that the key to happiness for women is being

psychologically empowered and shows that ecotourism can be used as a means to create positive change in women's lives.

Governmental and non-governmental organizations should support microfinance opportunities for rural development in such a way as to support women's empowerment and well-being.

Additionally, the study clearly illustrates that the authorities should provide training programs to support women who live in rural areas of Northern Cyprus to teach them new skills to empower them. International organizations, such as the United Nations and European Union, which are already active in Northern Cyprus, should also further support ecotourism and enhance their activities to help local NGOs and potential women entrepreneurs, who can be included in ecotourism.

The programs to empower women ecotourism entrepreneurs should not only consider the support programs to deliver know-how programs to eliminate barriers but also include interventions in order to increase growth mindset. Studies show that such interventions can only have sustained results in growth mindset in environments that are supportive where peer norms support challenges seeking (Yeager et al., 2019).

The findings can be used by governmental, non-governmental and international organizations to design new programs and organize capacity-building activities such as training programs, workshops and field trips at the grassroots level with current and potential women entrepreneurs.

#### **2.9.4 Limitations of the Study and Recommendations for Future Research**

A qualitative study should be conducted to gain deeper insights related to our findings. Additionally, the scope of our study included only women entrepreneurs in Northern Cyprus, and future studies may replicate this study in other geographical regions to see how culture and other contextual factors affect the relationships among incremental mindsets, psychological empowerment and the flourishing of women entrepreneurs.

## Chapter 3

### STUDY TWO

#### 3.1 Introduction

There has been a dramatic rise in the number of local communities turning to ecotourism. In fact, over the last thirty years, ecotourism has become the fastest growing sector of tourism (TIES, 2019). Many rural communities turned to ecotourism which they hoped would lead to the creation of jobs, the development of new business opportunities, skill development and control and protection of their natural resources (Dahal, B., Anup, K. C., & Sapkota, 2020; Gurung, D. B., & Seeland, 2008; Ormsby, A., & Mannle, 2006; Prasetyo, N., Carr, A., & Filep, 2020; Somarriba-Chang, M., & Gunnarsdotter, 2012; Vannelli, K., Hampton, M. P., Namgail, T., & Black, 2019; Wiredu, F., Takyi, S. A., Amponsah, O., & Tetteh, 2020).

Ecotourism initiatives have the potential to address the needs of local communities since any income generated (especially in underserved areas) remains in those localities, thereby serving the members of the communities in question (TIES, 2019).

Furthermore, the authors argue that the creation of income-generating activities for women through ecotourism would help alleviate poverty, improve the status women, and promote sustainable development of the local communities (Nordin et al., 2014; Scheyvens, 2000).

This study examines the impacts of ecotourism initiatives on women's gender roles, from the perspectives of women, dictated by their traditional lifestyles in a developing country, North Cyprus, stuck in a frozen conflict. It assesses the achievements and challenges women face in ecotourism and its impact on their empowerment and well-being and the limitations of an incremental growth mindset.

## **3.2 Literature Review**

### **3.2.1 Gender and Tourism**

The tourism sector can create jobs for women who are thought to have skills which are appropriate for the service industry. Employment in the tourism sector can improve the financial circumstances of the women (Çiçek, D.; Zencir, E., & Kozak, 2017) thereby enabling them to improve the finances of their families and to become more independent of men (Barbieri et al., 2019; Gentry, 2007; Tucker, H., & Boonabaana, 2012)

Employment in the tourism sector can also present women with the chance to become leaders (Tran & Walter, 2014). Working in the tourism sector can also improve the social status of women (Knight, D. W., & Cottrell, 2016; Scheyvens, 1999) and lead to more gender equity (Duffy, L. N., Kline, C. S., Mowatt, R. A., & Chancellor, 2015). In those communities where gender roles are of a traditional nature, the introduction of tourism jobs provides a stimulus for the empowerment of women, increasing their self-esteem and degree of independence (Gil Arroyo, C., Barbieri, C., Sotomayor, S., & Knollenberg, 2019) which provides them with the chance to become household decision-makers (Knight, D. W., & Cottrell, 2016) and, in the process, increases their bargaining power within the family (Rinaldi, A., & Salerno, 2019).

Tourism is a highly gendered industry (Ferguson, 2011) as there is a clear horizontal and vertical segregation of genders (Campos-Soria, J. A., Marchante-Mera, A., & Ropero-García, 2011; Santos, L. D., & Varejão, 2007). Not only is there a gender pay gap (Fleming, 2015) with women and men employed in gender specific occupations, but there are also concerns about the quality of employment opportunities available to women working in the tourism sector (Muñoz-Bullón, 2009).

Additionally, in tourism enterprises, women are often unable to grow in professional environments and are relegated to low-income and low-skill positions that are considered extensions of their family roles, such as housekeeping (Çiçek, D.; Zencir, E., & Kozak, 2017). Extant research has also shown that in some cases, tourism has served to perpetuate traditional gender roles and expectations, mostly related to women being tasked with domestic chores when tending to tourists (Pritchard, A., & Morgan, 2000).

Many women work in jobs where they use their domestic skills (such as cooking, cleaning, and crafting) and thus earn lower wages than their male counterparts (Bolles, 1997; Muñoz-Bullón, 2009). In fact, some scholars argue that in many ways tourism employment has a detrimental effect on gender equality and women's empowerment, and, indeed may exacerbate inequalities (Ferguson, 2011). Others demonstrated that even in ecotourism activities, issues of exclusion affecting women may still exist (Jones, 2005). Women are either unable to participate or are prohibited from partaking in them (Tucker, H., & Boonabaana, 2012).

In other ecotourism projects, women lacked control over their household finances and resources, and had limited involvement in community level leadership positions (Pleno, 2006; Tran & Walter, 2014). Scheyvens (2000) argued that ecotourism runs the risk of disadvantaging and marginalizing local women. When ecotourism results in traditional activities by women acquiring a commercial value, it can be the case that men usurp the roles played by women thereby controlling the flow of revenue resulting from the presence of tourism (Lenao & Basupi, 2016; Pritchard, A., & Morgan, 2000).

The involvement of women in tourism can also result in the disruption of gender roles in family and social structures (Duffy, L. N., Kline, C. S., Mowatt, R. A., & Chancellor, 2015). It can erode family dynamics, especially in communities with traditional values (Gil Arroyo, C., Barbieri, C., Sotomayor, S., & Knollenberg, 2019).

Nevertheless, the literature on the nexus between ecotourism and women's empowerment has reported positive outcomes, such as increases in independent income, financial decision-making, self-confidence, self-esteem, sense of purpose, division of labor at the household level, and environmental awareness (Dilly, 2003; Duffy, L. N., Kline, C. S., Mowatt, R. A., & Chancellor, 2015; Iakovidou, O., & Turner, 1995; Mwesigwa, D., & Mubangizi, 2016; Pleno, 2006; Tran & Walter, 2014; Vivanco, 2001), for women involved in ecotourism. Small scale, community-focused tourism initiatives had the most potential to enhance the empowerment of women and other marginalized groups (Annes, A., & Wright, 2015; Scheyvens, 2000).



Evidence of both positive and negative impacts of tourism development on women indicates that it is critical to take a closer look at the factors which facilitate or inhibit women's empowerment through tourism (Gil Arroyo, C., Barbieri, C., Sotomayor, S., & Knollenberg, 2019). The extent to which tourism can promote gender equality and empower women needs to be studied further (Ferguson, 2011; Khatiwada, L. K., & Silva, 2015; Scheyvens, 2007). Little is known about the aspects of tourism development which induce women's empowerment and alter their roles within communities and households (Duffy, L. N., Kline, C. S., Mowatt, R. A., & Chancellor, 2015).

Firstly, this study contributes to the existing literature by responding to a call for further research on ecotourism and its effect on gender equality and empowerment issues for women (Tran, L., & Walter, 2014; Walter, 2011). Secondly, it brings new insights into the relationship between empowerment, incremental mindset, subjective well-being and frozen conflict.

### **3.2.2 Empowerment Framework**

Although empowerment is a critical aspect of gender equality, women are not a homogenous group and not all live in similar environments. How women experience empowerment is socially, culturally, economically, historically, environmentally and politically determined by their ethnicity, class position, income level, religion, color, level of education, age, stage in the family cycle and so, on.

It is, therefore, not surprising that there are problems regarding definitions of empowerment and the contexts of empowerment (Boley & McGehee, 2014b; Eyben, R., & Napier-Moore, 2009). This might also explain why there is no automatic correlation between women's economic empowerment through income-generating

activities in the tourism industry and broader political and social empowerment (Pritchard, A., & Morgan, 2000; Tran, L., & Walter, 2014; Tucker, H., & Boonabaana, 2012).

Thus, empowerment is a multidimensional/multi-faceted concept (Desai, 2010; Scheyvens, 2000; T. Sofield, 2003) encompassing a number of dimensions including control, productiveness, choice, authority, freedom, self-strength, self-determination, self-power, self-reliance and a life of dignity in accordance with one's values.

As Sofield (2003) pointed out, empowerment is a multidimensional process that provides the community with a consultative process which is often characterized by outside expertise; the opportunity to choose; the ability to make decisions; the capacity to implement/apply those decisions; acceptance of responsibility for those decisions and actions and their consequences and outcome directly benefiting the community and its members, not directed or channeled into other communities and/or their members.

For the purposes of this research, (Scheyvens, 1999) proposed economic, psychological, social and political empowerment framework designed for analysis of the impacts of ecotourism ventures on local communities will be used since she provides a detailed description of what empowerment should look like within a sustainable tourism development.

### **3.2.3 Ecotourism and North Cyprus**

After military conflict in 1974, the island of Cyprus was divided into two areas with the south of the island being inhabited by Greek Cypriots under the Republic of Cyprus and the north being inhabited by Turkish Cypriots under the Turkish

Republic of Northern Cyprus. The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus was recognized only by Turkey and has been subject to economic and political embargoes for the last 45 years.

With a lack of international diplomatic recognition and with its small scale economic structure and mostly dependent on Turkey's financial aid, it has gone through little economic and political development (Altınay, L., & Bowen, 2006; Gokdemir, O., & Tahsin, 2014; Yasarata, M., Altınay, L., Burns, P., & Okumus, 2010).

In rural areas where poverty and under-development is most apparent, ecotourism is embraced as a poverty alleviation solution (Gunsoy & Hannam, 2013). In fact, a community-based, small-scale tourism model was selected as the most appropriate strategic model for the sustainable development of the Karpaz region, and the Buyukkonuk village was chosen as a pilot village for eco-village tourism development by the North Cyprus government in 2007 (Gunsoy & Hannam, 2013).

The aim, based on Wheeler's principles, was to improve the long-term health and welfare of communities by working with local history, culture, economy and ecology (Tuğun, Ö., & Karaman, 2014).

Since then, there has been an increase in the ecotourism activities in many rural parts of North Cyprus due to the tourism development policies of the local governments and the efforts of local entrepreneurs (Gunsoy & Hannam, 2013). Many rural regions developed community oriented festivals to celebrate local culture, promote sustainable community development and at the same time raise environmental awareness and consciousness of endangered species in those areas.

The Medos Tulip (*Tulipa Cypria*) festival is specifically designed to raise awareness and protect the *Tulipa Cypria* (IUCN Red list of threatened species 2011) but at the same time to generate income for the local community through the sale of traditional food and products (Gunsoy & Hannam, 2013). The annual Lefke Orchid Valley Walk is another ecotourism event designed to raise awareness and protect the 20 different types of orchids which exist in the area from people pulling them out to make *sahlep* (hot milky drink made from the tubes of the orchid).

On the other hand, the Grape Festival at Mehmetcik village promotes traditional viticulture. Traditional products of the village, made from grapes, are promoted in order to encourage the continuation of the cultivation of grapes, which has provided a livelihood for many villagers over the years.

In these rural parts of the country the middle aged women, in particular, embraced ecotourism (Gunsoy & Hannam, 2013). Circumscribed by gender stereotyping, lack of formal education and religion these women had limited opportunities for employment. Ecotourism created possibilities for this group of women to take their domestic skills outside the home and earn income, which could enable them to strengthen their positions in the family and in the community as well as giving them more control over their lives and contributing to their well-being. The ecotourism initiatives have the potential to provide self-employment opportunities for these women in small and medium sized income generating activities and thus create the paths for economic, social, psychological and political empowerment (Scheyvens, 1999).

### **3.2.4 The Status of Rural Women in North Cyprus**

Traditionally, due to lack of educational and economic opportunities and cultural constraints concerning “respectability”, very few Turkish Cypriot women worked outside the home before the 1970’s (Scott, 1997). Other cultural constraints regarded men as the breadwinners of the family and women as the homemakers (Güven - Lisaniler & Uğural, 2002). Regardless of many advances, today, Turkish Cypriot women still suffer horizontal and vertical segregation at work, have a higher unemployment rate and are underrepresented in the political arena. This impacts on their status in society and influences their life satisfaction (Gokdemir, O., & Tahsin, 2014).

In rural parts of North Cyprus where patriarchy is most apparent, women felt this gender inequality the most. These rural areas are populated mainly by small rural farming families composed of native Turkish Cypriots and immigrants from Turkey with a history of collectivist culture with its emphasis on maintaining rules and traditions in society as well as adhering to Islamic rules (Yucel, D., & Koydemir, 2015).

Males are the primary authority figures in these communities and own and control resources and production. Women, on the other hand, are so called “home makers” responsible for household duties such as cooking, cleaning, mothering, sewing and production of handcrafts and tapestry. The lack of education and employment opportunities for women in these regions, coupled with Islamic rules and regulations, result in women lacking economic, social, psychological and political power.

However, with the development of ecotourism in these areas, women's socially ascribed roles had the potential to be transformed into income generating enterprises (Tucker, H., & Boonabaana, 2012). By using their domestic and craft production skills, women were able to produce tourism products such as traditional food and handicrafts. As custodians of this extensive culture of home making skills and knowledge which passed from mothers to their daughters and was thereby developed, perfected and retained women were strategically positioned to potentially earn economic returns from the commercial exploitation of these skills and knowledge (Lenao & Basupi, 2016).

### **3.3 Methodology**

For the purposes of this research, a qualitative methodology with a feminist research design was adopted to collect detailed information about the experiences and the challenges faced by female entrepreneurs participating in ecotourism. As feminist researchers, we were committed to understanding the experiences of women and gendered power relationships and discourses in a predominantly patriarchal society (Zembaty, 1997) from the perspective of the women being researched. This research was done by, for and about women and thus was grounded in feminist values and beliefs.

Quantitative methodology was rejected for having a "context stripping" nature (Bohan, 1992) and being in direct conflict with the aims of feminist research (Mies, 1983). Instead, researchers chose to focus on the subjective interpretations of women by adopting interpretivism and a qualitative methodology. Through qualitative research, we avoided transforming women into 'object-like subjects' (Unger, 1983), with the interests and concerns of research participants completely subordinated to

those of ours, the researchers (Campbell, R., & Schram, 1995). We wanted to give a voice to women and not silence them with the powerful voice of the researchers (Maynard, 1998).

As researchers adhering to an interpretive research paradigm and assuming a socially constructed reality, we wanted to understand the phenomenon of interest from the individual perspectives of those who were involved with it. The focus of data collection was to get access to the voices of these underrepresented and marginalized groups (Hesse-Biber, 2014) and to “give voice” to them (Becker, S., & Aiello, 2013, p.63).

We believed that as researchers, if we were to make sense of these women’s world and to understand the meaning these women gave to their world, we as researchers must approach it through the participant’s own perspective and in the participant’s own terms (Denzin, 1989; Robertson, M. H., & Boyle, 1984). Thus, our aim was to try to avoid projecting our ‘values, dispositions, attitudes and perceptions’ onto the participants’ social realities (Hoskins, 2015) as much as we could.

As a critical component of feminist research we recognized and acknowledged the importance of reflexivity and, as a result, understood how developing an “acute awareness” (Iphofen & Tolich, 2019, p.135) of one’s background can cast light on the research experience (Gringeri, C. E., Wahab, S., & Anderson-Nathe, 2010). Throughout the research process, we tried to be reflexive about how we interpreted our data, our role in the analytic process, and the pre-conceived ideas and assumptions we might bring to our analysis (Devine, F., & Heath, 1999).

After all, as (Reinharz, S., & Davidman, 1992) pointed out, the ‘voices’ of respondents do not speak on their own; it is we, the researchers, who make choices about how to interpret these voices and which transcript extracts to present as evidence. We tried to reflect and locate ourselves (as affluent, educated researchers) in social structures in order to understand ourselves and others (Letherby, 2003).

In tune with feminist values we used in-depth interviewing techniques to collect data (Wigginton & Lafrance, 2019). In-depth face-to-face interviews have become the most popular “feminist method” (Kelly, L., Burton, S., & Regan, 1994, p.34) and the best way of collecting high quality data (Neuman, 2014). As researchers, we wanted to elicit a vivid picture of the participants’ perspectives, opinions, feelings and experiences and thus explore the topic in some depth (Walker, 1985) and, as researchers, come to see the respondents’ complex social world (Lincoln, Y. S., & Denzin, 2000).

As feminist researchers, we were also very aware of the hierarchy or the nature of the power relationship that exists between the interviewer–interviewee. Although there are debates about the extent to which this power relationship can be minimized (Nazneen, S., Darkwah, A., & Sultan, 2014), we tried to develop strategies for empowering participants throughout the research process (Miller, T., & Boulton, 2007). One way of minimizing this hierarchy is closely related to creating more egalitarian relationships between researchers and participants and thus producing shared or co-produced knowledge (Burgess-Proctor, 2015). In order to achieve this, we tried to create a “high level of rapport” with our interviewees (Wigginton & Lafrance, 2019, (p.492)).



All of our interviews took place in the homes of the interviewees where they were able to relax in their own environments. We were their guests and, thus, they were in control of things. Before the interviewing began, we tried to put the respondents at ease and establish a rapport with them (Lancaster, 2005). We sat talking and socializing with them for an hour or more, drinking coffee and getting to know each other. We even had lunch in one of the respondent's mum's house. When we left to drive home, some of them wished us a safe journey and asked us to call them back and let them know that we had arrived home safely. By establishing rapport, we were able to gain the trust of our participants and build their confidence about sharing information with us (Neuman, 2014).

We were also aware that by assuming the right to ask questions, we were also, potentially, placing the interviewees in a "position of subservience or inferiority" (Wigginton & Lafrance, 2019, p.492). We tried to shift this power that we had as researchers by presenting ourselves as learners who had a sympathetic interest in the interviewee's life and who wanted to understand it (Burgess, 1984). Throughout the interviews, we also emphasized that there was no right or wrong answer but that what was important for us was "the perspective of the women being interviewed;" (Wigginton & Lafrance, 2019 p.492).

We felt that adopting this kind of role made building rapport between the interviewer and interviewees possible; further, it made in-depth understanding of the interviewees' lives possible (Neuman, 2014). By being sympathetic, empathetic and understanding, we adopted a feminist ethic of care, and thus we were emotionally involved in our respondents' lives (Campbell, R., Adams, A. E., Wasco, S. M., Ahrens, C. E., & Sefl, 2010).

As researchers, we felt that we were not objective and detached. Instead, as feminist researchers, we interacted and collaborated with the women we studied. We fused our personal and professional lives. Thus, through a feminist ethic of care we believed that we reduced power differentials between researchers and participants, (Mauthner, 2012).

Respondents were identified through purposeful sampling techniques in order to access those who were “relevant to research questions” (Bryman, 2012, p.418) and thus get access to knowledgeable participants (Creswell, 2014). Initially, a list of women involved in the ecotourism activities was obtained from the Business Women Association of Northern Cyprus. Two key women in the ecotourism movement who were involved in the establishment of an ecotourism movement in North Cyprus, were our main “informers /gatekeepers” to the field. Initially, they put us in contact with some women (who were involved in ecotourism) who, in turn, directed us to other women to interview. Thus, snowball sampling was also used to reach women working in ecotourism.

Interview times and venues were determined according to the convenience and wishes of the interviewees. The in-depth interviews lasted for more than an hour. In addition, time was spent socializing and putting the interviewees at ease, with the result that, between two and three hours were spent with each of them. We felt that this was very important in order to create rapport with our interviewees.

The interviews were conducted with the aid of a loosely formulated interview guide. We felt that imposing too much structure on the interview would inhibit the interviewees’ responses and we would acquire only an incomplete understanding of

the phenomenon of interest. In total, 40 women involved in ecotourism activities in different parts of North Cyprus were interviewed. The size of the sample was determined by the level of saturation where no new categories, themes or explanations emerged (Neuman, 2014). Four of these interviewees were known as leaders/mentors in their regional areas.

Table 9. Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

<b>No of Respondents</b>	<b>Name *</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Marrital Status</b>	<b>Level of ** Education</b>
<u>1</u>	Ayşe	Handicrafts	55-60	Married	Univercity
<u>2</u>	Nalan	Handicrafts	55-60	Married	Lycée
<u>3</u>	Suzan	Handicrafts	50-55	Married	Lycée
<u>4</u>	Kezban	Traditional food production	60-65	Married	Middle School
<u>5</u>	Leyla	Leader/Mentor	50-55	Single	Post Graduate (MS)
<u>6</u>	Fatma	Organic Farming	55-60	Married	Middle School
<u>7</u>	Nilgün	Organic Farming	60-65	Widowed	Middle School
<u>8</u>	Amber	Organic Farming	50-55	Married	Lycée
<u>9</u>	<b>Arzu</b>	Leader/Mentor	55-60	Married	Lycée
<u>10</u>	Mine	Handicrafts	55-60	Married	Middle School
<u>11</u>	Hatice	Traditional food production	50-55	Married	Primary School
<u>12</u>	Songül	Handicrafts	70-75	Married	Middle School
<u>13</u>	Anıl	Handicrafts	60-65	Married	Middle School
<u>14</u>	Dilek	Handicrafts	70-75	Married	Middle School
<u>15</u>	Deniz	Handicrafts	55-60	Married	Middle School
<u>16</u>	Meltem	Handicrafts	55-60	Married	Middle School
<u>17</u>	Eliz	Handicrafts	70-75	Married	Primary School
<u>18</u>	Tomris	Traditional food production	40-45	Married	Lycée
<u>19</u>	Tuna	Traditional food production	40-45	Married	Lycée
<u>20</u>	Ayla	Traditional food production	55-60	Married	Middle School
<u>21</u>	Melis	Traditional food production	55-60	Married	University
<u>22</u>	Semra	Handicrafts	50-55	Married	Lycée
<u>23</u>	Reyhan	Traditional food production	30-35	Married	University
<u>24</u>	Melike	Traditional food production	30-35	Married	Post Graduate (MS)
<u>25</u>	Selma	Hotel Owner	50-55	Married	Post Graduate (MS)
<u>26</u>	Emel	Leader/ Mentor	65-70	Married	University
<u>27</u>	Zehra	Traditional food production	30-35	Married	Middle School
<u>28</u>	Neval	Soap maker	30-35	Married	Middle School
<u>29</u>	Seher	Traditional food production	30-35	Married	Middle School

<u>30</u>	Ezgi	Traditional food production	30-35	Married	Middle School
<u>31</u>	Emine	Traditional food production	40-45	Married	Primary School
<u>32</u>	Naz	Traditional food production	65-70	Married	Lycée
<u>33</u>	Raziye	Handicrafts	60-65	Married	Lycée
<u>34</u>	Nafia	Traditional food production	65-70	Married	Primary School
<u>35</u>	Hediye	Leader/Mentor	60-65	Married	Lycée
<u>36</u>	Ayten	Handicrafts	55-60	Married	Lycée
<u>37</u>	Dudu	Handicrafts	50-55	Married	Lycée
<u>38</u>	Nurcan	Handicrafts	50-55	Married	Primary School
<u>39</u>	Ebru	Handicrafts	50-55	Married	Lycée
<u>40</u>	Zeynep	Handicrafts	60-65	Married	Lycée

\*All names used were pseudonyms in order to assure confidentiality.

\*\* Level of Education (Primary School between ages of 7 to 11; Middle School between ages of 11 to 14; Lycée between ages of 14 to 18)

Throughout the research ethical guidelines were adhered to. The purpose of the interview was clearly stated at the beginning of each interview. Participants were also provided with information on how the interview data would be used, and, who would have access to the data. Participants were also assured about the confidentiality of the interview.

The interviews were audio recorded with permission from the participants and transcribed verbatim, thus allowing for rich presentation of textual data in the analysis. After long familiarization with data, codes, concepts and categories were created. Through interpretivist discourse analysis, a thick description of the data in the voices of women was gained.

In accordance with a constructivist tradition, the authenticity criterion was used fairly and faithfully, to show a range of realities (Lincoln, Y.S., & Guba, 1985) As well as using reflexivity, we also tried to enhance authenticity by prolonged engagement.

Through prolonged engagement we were able to build trust with our informers and thus obtain rich information and develop an in-depth understanding.

We also used a stepwise replication technique where, as researchers we work separately on the data and only after the data analysis was completed did we compare the results. The emphasis on thick description while writing the methodology was also aimed at increasing rigor by providing detailed descriptions of methods, their purposes, research participants and settings.

### **3.4 Results and Discussion**

The data were analyzed in relation to the following researcher constructed themes, based on the narratives of the women and on literature: empowerment, gender discrimination, frozen conflict, incremental mindset and well-being. We analyzed the empowerment potential of home-based ecotourism entrepreneurship undertaken by marginalized Turkish Cypriot women residing in under developed regions affected by frozen conflict and its impacts on the incremental mindset and well-being of these women.

#### **3.4.1 Empowerment**

It has been demonstrated that, due to a multitude of factors, small-scale informal home-based activities provide a critical route to income and related social benefits for marginalized women within developing economies (Al-Dajani & Marlow, 2013). These small-scale enterprises also have the advantage of enabling women to carry out their economic activities in the secure milieu of their homes using their traditional domestic skills to perform these economic activities (Chifos, 2007). Using Scheyvens (1999) framework, the potential and the extent to which

marginalized women can be psychologically, socially, politically and economically empowered through ecotourism entrepreneurship was explored.

### **Economic Empowerment**

Scheyvens, (2000) explained how women's economic empowerment is the process via which women enlarge their access to financial resources and increase their control over their own lives enabling them to make selections that advantage themselves. The results of this research clearly showed that through a number of ecotourism enterprises women were able to enlarge their access to financial resources since many business opportunities were developed which provided women with regular and reliable income (Scheyvens, 2000). The majority of the women (38 out of 40) claimed that being involved with ecotourism provided them with economic benefits.

Women also gained empowerment by gaining control over their own income (Scheyvens, 2000). Most of the women claimed that having control over "their" money was very important for them. Six of the interviewees made the point that although their husbands would give money to them whenever they wanted it, they preferred to have their own money so that they could spend it whenever they wanted to and buy whatever they wanted to. This they said made them feel stronger and more confident. As Ayla pointed out:

*"To me, money is not everything, but, as they say it is power. Basically, when you want to buy something, or do something, if you have your own money to do it, you feel more confident within yourself".*

*"You feel free. My husband wants money from me [she smiles proudly]. I spend as I wish. I do not ask him". (Zehra)*

However, the impact of the economic empowering of women through tourism goes beyond the individual benefits to women. Most women look beyond the self and use often meager proceeds from tourism businesses to cater for children's and the entire community needs (Atelijevic, 2009).

There were many examples of women contributing to the household budget by buying goods such as refrigerators and cookers, or, by paying electricity and water bills. Emine told us:

*“With the money that I earn from ecotourism, I buy something every year. One year I bought a sofa set. The year after that I bought a television. Later on, I bought a washing machine. The money I earn belongs to us all.”*

Some of these women also helped to pay for their children's schooling, weddings and contributed towards building their homes as well as giving pocket money to grandchildren. It was Ayla again who pointed out:

*“Because of this job, I was able to provide my children with education, help towards my son's wedding and now help him to build his own house.”*

One of the women went beyond helping her immediate family. Reyhan talked about making contributions to orphanages from her earnings as well as from her produce.

However, as one of the leaders explained, these women sometimes did not have much of a choice:

*“These women pay their electricity bills and water bills. They buy school uniforms for their children. Some of them have a little bit extra; they go on holidays for the first time in their lives...some of them have new kitchens. They have no choice. Their old husbands do not bother with such things. They will not give them the money. The refrigerator is leaking, it is 10 years old. They do not care” (Emel).*

Thus, economic gains from home-based ecotourism enterprises were central in supplementing the household budget and contributing to family welfare. As the creator of this income, women gained some degree of financial independence and a voice regarding how this income was to be used within the family. Further, women gained increased awareness of the role they played in reducing material poverty within the family and this contributed to their empowerment.

Women also gained economic empowerment by acquiring business skills (Scheyvens, 2000). There were many opportunities for women to develop business skills which helped them to run and market their businesses better. As one of the leaders/mentors pointed out:

*“At the beginning, education for these women was very important since some of them were barely able to read and write. It was necessary to give them education on hygiene, packaging, marketing and customer relations. We opened courses every year”. (Arzu)*

Some of these women were able to expand their businesses outside ecotourism activities and gain further economic empowerment (Scheyvens, 2000) There were examples of two women, who, with the help of their children, opened webpages to sell their produce. There were others who catered at local events and for businesses.

### **Psychological Empowerment**

Psychological empowerment occurs when a person's pride and self-esteem are boosted by realization of how outsiders value their distinctive culture, natural resources and traditional knowledge (Scheyvens, 1999). All of the women interviewed mentioned how proud they felt when tourists showed their appreciation of their products. They felt immense pride when people showed interest in their



products, liked their products and bought their products. They felt that their skills were valued by outsiders and that they had something special to share. Eliz's response was typical of those expressed by the majority of the participants:

*“When I get good feedback from my customers I am very happy. I feel very proud”.*

In fact some of the women went as far as saying that they did not care whether or not they made money. What was more important for them was that their work was appreciated and liked.

In essence, psychological empowerment can be described as residents' pride and self-esteem being enhanced because they feel special and believe they have important skills and resources to share with visitors (Boley & McGehee, 2014a).

Making sales and getting good feedback from customers not only made women feel proud but also increased their confidence in their worth and in their abilities (Scheyvens, 1999). Hatice, a traditional baker, talked about how her confidence in herself and in her abilities increased as a result of selling all her goods in the eco market. Others talked about the motivation they felt to do even better. As Deniz pointed out:

*“When someone likes my product and says that I did it beautifully, I feel very proud of myself. That motivates me even more.”*

It was evident that all of the women interviewed gained a degree of psychological empowerment as a result of their involvement in the home-based ecotourism activities.

## **Social Empowerment**

The results also showed that there were the beginnings of social empowerment for women. There were examples of enhanced community equilibrium, with residents feeling more connected and working together (Scheyvens, 1999).

At first, other women within the community, mainly their friends, neighbors and relatives came out to support them by buying their produce. Support from husbands came later on when they saw the economic benefits of ecotourism. Some women talked about how husbands who did not want them to be involved in ecotourism at the beginning, became more supportive and helpful once they saw them making money.

Although how much the overall social status of women in society improved is very difficult to say, there were definitely examples of the social empowerment of women. What was very clear was the influence the original entrepreneurs had on the other women in the community. Women in the community did appreciate and value the efforts of these women and gave them the courage to become entrepreneurs themselves. Due to these pioneering female entrepreneurs, the self-confidence and self-respect necessary to run a business was also developed among other women in the community (Gil Arroyo, C., Barbieri, C., Sotomayor, S., & Knollenberg, 2019).

As one of the leaders pointed out:

*“At the beginning no one wanted to get involved in ecotourism. Later, when they saw others, they all wanted to get involved in it” (Arzu).*

Whilst the generation of income from ecotourism was an important motivator for others to become involved in ecotourism too, the comradeship women felt towards

each other was also very important. All of the respondents talked about the value of meeting and engaging with other ecotourism entrepreneurs and personal clients. This not only enabled women to gain confidence and share experiences related to their work, but, also helped them to gain a presence in the broader community (Carter, S., & Al-Dajani, 2010) and to cope with challenges as a group rather than as individuals (McMillan et al., 2011). Thus, being with other entrepreneurs was critical in challenging isolation and forging social links and gaining social empowerment.

Social empowerment can also enhance social status, change laws, improve standards and extend educational opportunities for women (Hovorka, 2006; Jutting, J., & Morrisson, 2005). There were educational opportunities for these women who were involved in ecotourism. There was support from the European Union, the Turkish Embassy, US Aid and SAVE. There were organized courses and seminars for women on hygiene, packaging and so on. There were educational trips, funded by the European Union, to Macedonia and Italy, to learn about ecotourism activities elsewhere.

By organizing themselves, women changed their social status as evidenced by the ecotourism committee becoming the Ecotourism Association. Participating in a formal association strengthened their sense of cohesion and collaboration (Gil Arroyo, C., Barbieri, C., Sotomayor, S., & Knollenberg, 2019; Scheyvens, 2000).

Thus, there were many examples of how the social empowerment of women was facilitated and enhanced through home-based ecotourism enterprises.

## **Political Empowerment**

Although there were many examples of the economic, social and psychological empowerment of these female ecotourism entrepreneurs, there were no signs of political empowerment. Political empowerment occurs when all members of the community are fairly represented and have outlets to share their concerns about tourism development (Scheyvens, 1999). The majority of the women claimed that they were not represented fairly by anyone.

To establish political empowerment, any agencies which are helping with the development of ecotourism must seek of the opinions of the different community groups, especially women (Scheyvens, 1999). These women complained that although they share their concerns with the Ministry of Tourism they do not believe that their concerns are listened to. This is evidenced in the words of another leader Hediye:

*“In theory we have a right to say [she laughs]. We could go to the Ministry of Tourism. They are responsible for this area and in theory they listen to us. They listen to us and say okay but they do not take us seriously. Basically our concerns are not valued”.*

However, in order to achieve political empowerment women should also have access to decision making (Scheyvens, 1999). These women not only did not have any channels through which to share their concerns, but, also they had no access to decision making. Hediye, so accurately put it:

*“None of us have a say in anything. We just have stands to sell our products. That’s all”.*

Furthermore, some of them were not aware that they should have access to decision making. They felt that this was the role of the government, the Ministry of Tourism or the leaders.

The results showed that these women only participated in ecotourism activities and had no political power since they did not evaluate ecotourism projects, make demands about ecotourism projects or get involved in the decision - making process (Scheyvens, 2000).

However, in the original and the most popular eco-village, Büyükkonuk, women faced disempowerment. Although there were indications of increased political empowerment for women in the early stages, these soon evaporated. Women had political empowerment due to their involvement in the feasibility stages through to its implementation (Scheyvens, 2000). These women were able to organize themselves and seek funds from different organizations to implement ecotourism in their area. They also organized educational classes to improve themselves. They moved from being an ecotourism committee to become the Ecotourism Association.

However, once the ecotourism project started to generate income, the local council began to take an interest, and, before long took control of this project by becoming *the authority which issues licenses for the women's stalls. As Hediye explained:*

*“At the beginning we controlled everything. Only those women who were members of the Ecotourism Association could have stands. This way we were able to give them education and control the quality of the event. Now the leader of the council controls everything.*

She further explained how the leader of the council introduced politics to the ecotourism events. He changed the date for eco-day to get political gains, invited political leaders and gave political speeches and attempted to bribe women to vote for him in return for meeting all the needs of the Ecotourism Association.

This was a clear case of “autocratic and self-interested leadership” causing political disempowerment of women (Scheyvens, 1999, p.249).

### **3.4.2 Empowerment and Gender Discrimination**

Although women felt certain levels of economic, psychological and social empowerment, there were also many forms of gender discrimination faced by women. The main problem mentioned by the majority of women related to the dominance of men in their household and society. They complained about the huge amounts of responsibility they had at home and also of not being free to do what they want to do. For example, Anil’s statement was a common theme:

*“Women have hard time in this world. Ask any women and they will tell you that they have to think about everything. They have to think about cooking, washing, cleaning, looking after children, if they are married looking after their son/daughter in-laws, grandchildren, and husband.”*

Balancing work and home life is challenging, and, if not well managed, may cause an increased level of stress.

Women talked about their desire to be free of male control and to have financial independence.

*“I always wanted to be free. I wanted a life which belonged to me; where no one is trying to control me. Free to stand on my own legs. My occupation secure enough so I do not depend on my husband. I want to stand on my own. I have that strength but I do not have the opportunity” (Nurcan).*

Although women gained some level of economic independence which helped to provide more autonomy and independent decision making in satisfying their families' needs, women also faced gender inequality which made their lives even harder. As is the case in most cultures, especially in developing countries, women in this study faced many difficulties and experienced a high level of stress in balancing family and work life (Guttek et al., 1991).

Going to eco markets took women away from their traditional roles and obligations. Many of the respondents pointed out how not being able to fulfill these domestic responsibilities caused problems for them. One of the respondents referred to this male control as “*psychological abuse*” (Ayşe). Songül talked about how her job has *to take second place to her domestic responsibilities. She said:*

*“My husband does not want me to do this. He says to me, “you have to get my food ready”. If I am busy or engaged with other women and I cannot get his food ready, this will cause an argument.”*

Thus, it is not a simple equation that women and their families who benefit economically from ecotourism enterprises will have a greater voice or become free of male control and be considered as men's equals at home. As Scheyvens (2000) pointed out the issue of power is important but complex.

Older women also complained about their lack of education due to patriarchal parental control. Dilek's was the typical answer:

*“I wanted to study, but, my dad did not allow it. In those days, not many women were allowed to study. “Why would a beautiful girl study and what will she do?” he used to say. They did not allow us. What could we do?”*

Naz also talked about her lack of education.

*“My dad did not want to send me to University in case I found someone to marry and did not come back. They saw female children as insurance; they will look after them when they get old”.*

Thus, although ecotourism entrepreneurship facilitated the empowerment process it did not challenge the embedded patriarchy in society. Empowering women goes beyond empowering individual women. Women’s empowerment is a process of personal and social change, taking place over interlinked and mutually reinforcing psychological, political, social and economic domains, and through which women individually and collectively gain power, meaningful choices and control over their lives (Neil et al., 2014).

Thus, the empowerment of individual women will not provide gender equality as long as patriarchy remains intact. It will only stay as a potential for empowerment of women in society and not a solution. Empowerment of women can only be achieved when ecotourism enterprises for women can draw the line between the domestic and the professional sphere and do not allow the reinforcement of long standing patterns of oppression of women from one sphere to other – namely from home to work.

Breaking this legacy is a pivotal step towards the empowerment of women.

### **3.4.3 Well-being**

This study also investigated the effect of ecotourism enterprises on the well-being and mindsets of these female entrepreneurs. The interviewees wanted to establish what being involved in ecotourism meant to women. How did it impact on their lives and on their well-being? According to Seligman (2011) well-being can be measured by several factors, including positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment.



Flourishing, which is described as high levels of well-being and defined as a positive emotional state that leads to healthy social and psychological states, has been receiving more attention (Fredrickson & Losada, 2005). Moreover, flourishing also indicates a more comprehensive well-being of a person when looked at from a variety of aspects such as social relations, optimism, and purpose (Diener et.al 2010b; Fredrickson & Losada, 2005). When a person experiences an increased amount of emotional, social and psychological well-being, this can be explained as flourishing (Keyes, 2002).

One of the recurring themes in the narratives of the women relates to ecotourism being a source of happiness for them. Unanimously, the women who took part in the study stated that being involved in the production of traditional handicrafts and food for ecotourism made them very happy and enriched their lives in a number of ways. The core of this satisfaction and happiness was to be found in the joy of production itself, namely being involved in the design, creation and production process of their produce. Ayşe's response represents the experiences of other women in this regard:

*“You are doing something that you love. More importantly, you are creating something and creating something makes you very happy. Every time you are creating something new, the excitement of it motivates you. Whenever I start a new production, such as painting a tray, I do not want to leave it aside until I finish. The excitement of how it will look keeps me going. When I finish I feel superb. It gives me life and energy”.*

Socializing with other women who were also involved in ecotourism contributed to the well-being of women. Women valued the time they spent with other women at Eco markets.

*“This is like a center where everyone meets. Family. Friends. Enriched our social life”. (Selma)*

Most of the females complained about being housewives. They talked about the never ending housework and isolation of home. The common view was that their involvement in ecotourism improved their social life and took them outside the home. As Melike pointed out:

*“My social circle is expanded. I know a lot of people now. This gives me enormous happiness”.*

Those women who needed to take care of their sick children and husbands talked about how essential it was for them to be involved in ecotourism. Fatma, who has to take care of a child with special needs, said:

*“This is the only place I can breathe”.*

Similarly Dilek talked about how miserable her life is as a result of living with a husband who is a war veteran with psychological problems. She claimed that doing this job and getting out of the house helps her to clear her head and to make her happy.

*“Being social is good. I get out of the house. I see other people”.*

The results regarding women’s involvement in ecotourism definitely showed women flourishing. They experienced an amplified level of well-being that resulted in optimal happiness and fulfillment in life. They felt they had a purpose in life, they felt they were competent in what they were doing and felt positive about who they were. They were open to personal growth. They went to courses to improve themselves, visited other countries to learn from. They felt they were experiencing personal development, change and the expansion of their capacities.

However there were also others who were also experiencing a sense of frustration when faced with external factors such as corruption, nepotism, frozen conflict and patriarchy as they were prevented from doing what they felt they were capable of doing.

#### **3.4.4 Incremental Mindset**

According to Dweck (2006), mindset describes the way people think about ability and talent. She differentiated between a continuum of fixed mindset (those who believe that your abilities are innate and unchangeable and that people do not change) and those who have a growth mindset (those who believe new abilities can be developed through practice, dedication and hard work and that people can and do change).

It has been also argued that mindset is a key element in determining not only an individual's behavior, but also the level of happiness and success in life that he or she achieves (Aronson et al., 2002; B. C. S. Dweck, 2006; Kern et al., 2015; Alvarado et. al 2019). Thus, the implicit theory of intelligence states that individuals who scored high in growth mindset (incremental theory) will show increased levels of well-being (C. S. Dweck, 2012; Alvarado et. al 2019).

To determine the mindset of the participants, respondents were asked whether or not they believe that people's abilities are innate and unchangeable or new can abilities can develop through dedication and hard work.

The results showed that only a small minority (5 out of 40) had a fixed mindset and believed that people can never change. The rest of the participants (35) had a growth mindset where they believed that people can and do change. For 17 out of these 35

participants there were no questions about the ability of the people to change. As Melike stated:

*“I always had an open mind. Always thought about the future. Always tried to improve myself”.*

For the rest of the respondents (18), although they had growth mindsets, the issue was not as simple. Others thought for change to take place, something had to happen to cause such change such as a bad event or an opportunity. But, most importantly, they believed that the environment, the country and the community that they lived in was the most important factor. Zeynep’s answer was:

*“This depends on where you live. In a country where everything is orderly, people work, rely on their skills and might obtain everything they want. So far I have experienced that my efforts haven’t been appreciated, on the contrary, they have been prevented. So many times I worked hard to learn new things in order to get to places. Firstly, I was blocked within the family. Initially my father and then my husband weren’t keen on my receiving an education and working. They never supported me and asked why that was necessary. Despite them I worked hard and registered to courses with the hope of finding a job so I could do something positive. However we live in such a country that if you don’t have friends in the right places, hard work gets you nowhere. You have to promise politicians that you will vote for them and become a member of a party otherwise nothing will go your way. We live in a rotten system and nobody cares. I no longer have the ambition, desire or belief to succeed at something. Even if I can change myself, I can’t change the place I live. Who would listen to me?”*

It is suggested by Schneider (2001) that persons with a growth mindset are better able to cope with adversity and the unexpected and are more adaptable. However, the quotation above shows that there are limits to what can be achieved, in circumstances which are not propitious, even by someone with a growth mindset, as the respondent went to great lengths to overcome the resistance from her father and husband as she struggled to achieve her aspirations. Yet, having overcome such obstacles, she then found that she was stymied by ubiquitous corruption and nepotism.

What was interesting and also in conflict with what is to be found in the extant literature (Aronson et al., 2002; B. C. S. Dweck, 2006; Kern et al., 2015; Alvarado et.al 2019) was that women who have a high growth mindset felt lower levels of well-being and empowerment than those with a fixed mindset.

This was because women with a high growth mindset were more aware of the limitations imposed on them by gender inequality and the political situation pertaining to North Cyprus. Sixty-five years old Ebru explained how throughout her life, she believed in herself and in her ability to innovate, but, how throughout her life, she was stopped by her father, her husband, the culture and the political situation in North Cyprus.

*“I tried to do many different things. I always like to learn new things, Do new things. But I tell you, you try and work so hard but can never achieve what you want. I get angry with myself and ask myself, “Who do you think you are? Where do you think you live? Why do you think that you can change things?””*

This awareness of the presence of gender inequality and of the impact of the political situation caused a feeling of frustration amongst women with a high incremental mindset.

### **3.4.5 Frozen Conflict**

Women as well as complaining about gender inequality in society also complained about the political situation in North Cyprus. Isolation, lack of recognition and insecurity due to the state of frozen conflict has placed additional external constraints on these female entrepreneurs. Many respondents talked about the problems of being an entrepreneur in a country where there is a frozen conflict.

Ebru talked about how difficult it is to sell her produce due to economic and political embargoes and how difficult it is for tourists to fly to North Cyprus since no direct flights are allowed to North Cyprus.

*“Why should people [tourists] come? Airline tickets are expensive and people become exhausted being transferred from here to there before they can arrive. Then they hear that it is a problematic place. Why take the risk? They don’t come. So what happens? My products don’t get sold.”*

Ebru tried to sell her produce in the internet where she met other hurdles due to economic and political embargoes.

*“They said that I should sell these products on the internet and I was excited again. I worked hard and asked my children for help. Disappointment again. We don’t even have a valid postcode. People check and can’t find us on the internet so how can they trust us? Some people trusted us and placed orders. It was so difficult to send the products and also expensive. I struggle and struggle, every time a fiasco.”*

Respondents also explained how living in a frozen conflict has placed them in a state of limbo, which, in turn, has led to a loss of hope that any significant changes can take place. Hope resembles a state of mind, which is marked by its disconnection from the past by planning, dreaming, expecting, fantasizing, and so forth – all in a positively valued direction (Bar-Tal, 2001). Loss of hope influences peoples’ mindsets. Most of the respondents have no hope that the Cyprus conflict will be solved. As Meltem pointed out;

*“We were born and raised with the Cyprus problem. Whilst waiting for it to be solved, we are going to die and everything is going to be the same.”*

People who live in a particular society (i.e., culture) share central societal beliefs that consist of such contents as collective memories, ideologies, goals, myths, etc. (Bar-Tal, 2001). These central societal beliefs provide the prism through which

society members view their world and relate to it. This prism not only organizes society's cognitive outlook or directs intentional forms of actions, but also sets its collective emotional orientation.

Respondents not only lost their hope that anything will ever change but also believe that after being isolated from the rest of the world for 45 years society has become corrupted. The ability of governments to provide a trustworthy environment, and to deliver services honestly and efficiently, is also linked to the well-being of its citizens (Helliwell, J. F., & Huang, 2008). Research further shows that "good" government matters even more for the poor since the poor suffer more than the rich from government corruption in terms of accessibility. Zeynep stated that:

*"We live in such a country that if you don't have friends in the right places, hard work gets you nowhere. You have to promise politicians that you will vote for them and become a member of a party otherwise nothing will go your way. We live in a rotten system and nobody cares. I no longer have the ambition, desire or belief to succeed at something. Even if I can change myself, I can't change the place I live. Who would listen to me?"*

As a result she has lost all hope and enthusiasm.

*"I have lost enthusiasm; my hope. I just do it so that days will pass and I will keep living. Nothing will come of this country. We are like fish in an aquarium; we eat our fill and spend our lives. Some opportunists got close to the right people and go to places. The tail is wagging the dog. Because of this situation, I don't believe in change or anything like that."*

These quotations exemplify that the milieu in which people live and operate can have a countervailing effect on the influence of having an incremental mindset. Zeynep's experience was that no matter how hard she worked, no matter how innovating she was, the frozen state afflicting North Cyprus undermined all of her efforts.

### **3.5 Discussion and Conclusion**

Women's ecotourism enterprises provided these women with empowerment opportunities and with the chance to express share and celebrate their cultural heritage and identity within their communities through the creation of traditional crafts, embroidery and foods. Capitalizing on their traditional domestic skills, these women were able to create extra income for their families in a restricted environment.

The income generated not only allowed women to help their families but also created a feminized space where they could socialize, share their problems and encourage and motivate other women to become involved in small home-based entrepreneurship. It was a feminized niche which women felt a part of. In addition, women were able to do things that previously they were unable to do, such as attend meetings and travel outside of their villages.

In fact, there is growing evidence from the developing field of research on women's micro-enterprises that a positive relationship exists between motivation, empowerment and entrepreneurship (Carter, S., & Al-Dajani, 2010). Although this might be the case in some parts of the world, the equation is a lot more complicated than that. Yes, it is true that women we investigated had gained certain levels of economic, psychological and social empowerment through ecotourism entrepreneurship and had incremental mindsets; however, the extent of their motivation and well-being was very much affected by gender discrimination and the frozen conflict in Northern Cyprus. They feel that they have the strength, character and the desire to change, but, their circumstances will not allow them to do so.



Women were acutely aware of how these opportunities were restricted by socio-political factors, such as patriarchy, frozen conflict and corruption. In fact, this awareness of the presence of gender inequality and of the impact of the political situation caused a feeling of frustration amongst women with a high incremental mindset.

## Chapter 4

### GENERAL DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In the light of the self determination theory, we proved in Study One that women who have incremental mindset, experience a lower level of flourishing. They believe they can achieve their goals and dreams, but due to the external factors such as cultural norms and political issues, they feel restricted and limited. Therefore, they feel desperate and frustrated when they face the reality and feel unhappy.

However, when they feel psychologically empowered, they feel confident and strong to chase their dreams and create a change in their life by taking action. Therefore, the negative relationship is reversed into a positive one. In this research, psychological empowerment is proved to be a “game changer” in the relationship between incremental mindset and flourishing. It is illustrated clearly in Study One that, empowering those women entrepreneurs psychologically is the key to improve their autonomy and self-efficacy which lead them to experience higher level of flourishing.

In Study Two we clearly illustrate that women we investigated had gained certain levels of economic, psychological and social empowerment through ecotourism entrepreneurship and had incremental mindsets; however, the extent of their motivation and well-being was very much affected by gender discrimination and the frozen conflict in Northern Cyprus.

They feel that they have the strength, character and the desire to change, but, their circumstances will not allow them to do so. Women were acutely aware of how these opportunities were restricted by socio-political factors, such as patriarchy, frozen conflict and corruption. These findings confirm findings of Study One, by showing that the awareness of the presence of gender inequality and of the impact of the political situation caused a feeling of frustration amongst women with a high incremental mindset.

In summary we can conclude, although ecotourism projects provided tangible benefits for the women participating in them, it has to be acknowledged that these gains did not extend to the overthrowing of male dominance since any new activities undertaken by women were in addition to and not a replacement for their domestic chores. Further, these gains did not, except initially, include political empowerment as these women asserted that their views were not considered.

There is no silver bullet that can be used to free women from male dominance and provide them with empowerment. However, what may appear to be small advance can, over time, have a cumulative effect. Hence, it is recommended that ways be found to ensure that with any future ecotourism projects, the women in question play a full role in developing these projects from the very beginning.

Given the fact that most of these women lack formal education and experience, they will require help to start these projects. Any such help (especially financial) should be provided to the bodies set up to implement the project, such bodies being under the exclusive control of the women involved. Finally, these bodies should have formal representation at the local and national level of decision making.

Further research is required to tease out the intricacies of the different influences which can add to the empowerment and well-being of women in a variety of circumstances (including the difficulties engendered by a frozen conflict situation), not only to produce practical recommendations but to bring these issues into the forefront of the public domain.

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## **APPENDIX**

## **The Questionnaires Used:**

Dear Respondents

The questionnaire is designed to help you in order to express views regarding the relationship between your personality traits, level of empowerment and flourishing after you became entrepreneurs in ecotourism industry. Please tick the response which you believe adequately expresses your opinions. The researchers guarantee the security and privacy of personal information provided by you.

Thank you for your cooperation.

### Researcher Team:

Murude Ertac

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### Address:

Faculty of Tourism

Faculty of Business and Economics

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## Section 1-Personal Information

Complete this section with your personal information.

Age group: Less than 24 years  25-34years  35-44 years  45 years  
or more

Your educational condition: Primary School Diploma

Secondary School Diploma

High school diploma  Bachelor Higher degree  Master's Degree

How long have you been working in your own job?

Less than 1 year  1-3 years  4-6 years  More than 6 years

Marital status: Single  In a relationship  Married  Divorced

Separated  Widowed

Number of children: 0  1  2  3  more than 3

Section 2-Sample of Questionnaires which will be distributed to women  
entrepreneurs:

Direction: Below are five statements that you may agree or disagree with. Using the  
1 - 7 scale below, indicate your agreement with each item by placing the appropriate  
number on the line preceding that item related to Subjective Well-Being and eight  
statements related to Flourishing. Please be open and honest in your responding.

(7) Strongly agree (6) Agree (5) Slightly agree (4) Neither agree nor disagree (3)  
Slightly disagree (2) Disagree (1) Strongly disagree.

Flourishing Scale	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. I lead a purposeful and meaningful life.							
2. My social relationships are supportive and rewarding.							
3. I am engaged and interested in my daily activities.							
4. I actively contribute to the happiness and well-being of others.							
5. I am competent and capable in the activities that are important to me.							
6. I am a good person and live a good life.							
7. I am optimistic about my future.							
8. People respect me.							

(Diener et al. 2010)

Direction: Below are eight statements that you may agree or disagree with. Using the 1 - 6 scale below, indicate your agreement with each item by placing the appropriate

number on the line preceding that item related to incremental mindset. Please be open and honest in your responding.: (1) strongly disagree, (2) moderately disagree, (3) slightly disagree, (4) slightly agree, (5) moderately agree, (6) strongly agree

Incremental Mindset Scale	1	2	3	4	5	6
1.The kind of person someone is, is something basic about them, and it can't be changed very much.						
2.People can do things differently, but the important parts of who they are can't really be changed.						
3.Everyone is a certain kind of person, and there is not much that they can do to really change that.						
4.As much as I hate to admit it, you can't teach an old dog new tricks. People can't really change their deepest attributes.						
5.Everyone, no matter who they are, can significantly change their basic characteristics.						
6.People can substantially change the kind of person they are.						
7.No matter what kind of person someone is, they can always change very much.						
8.People can change even their most basic qualities						

(Levy and Dweck in 1997)

Direction: Below are 17 statements that you may agree or disagree with. Using the 1 - 5 scale below, indicate your agreement with each item by placing the appropriate number on the line preceding that item related to Women Empowerment. Please be open and honest in your responding. (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) neither agree nor disagree, (4) agree, (5) strongly agree

Psychological empowerment:	1	2	3	4	5
1.Makes me proud to be a resident of my village.					
2.Makes me feel special because people travel to see my county's unique features.					
3.Makes me want to tell others about what we have to offer in my village.					
4.Reminds me that I have a unique culture to share with visitors.					
5.Fosters a sense of 'community spirit' within me.					
6.Provides ways for me to get involved in my community.					

(RETS Scale, Boley and McGehee, 2014)