

Surviving Limbo:

Critical Career Capital Aspects for Entrepreneur Immigrants in an Extreme Context

Gamze Arman

Author Note

Gamze Arman, School of Social Sciences, University of the West of England

The author would like to thank to Aylin Aksoy and Şebnem Gürol for their contributions to data analysis, Fırat İncioğlu for his suggestions and support, and Prof. Akram Al Ariss and the anonymous reviewers for their valuable and inspiring feedback on earlier versions of this manuscript.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Gamze Arman, University of the West of England, School of Social Sciences, Coldharbour Lane BS16 1QY Bristol, UK

E-mail: gamze.arman@uwe.ac.uk

Gamze Arman declares that she has no conflict of interest.

Abstract

Purpose – The present study explored the adjustment (i.e., survival vs stay) of a unique group of Turkish entrepreneur immigrants in the United Kingdom, whose initial experiences upon their move were disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic in early 2020.

Methodology – Ten semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore this immigrant group's experience on the path to potential immigration success or failure as indicators of adjustment. The content of the interviews was analyzed via theoretical thematic analysis.

Findings – Key career capital aspects hindering entrepreneurial effort under the unique conditions of Covid-19 were defined as not knowing how to start a business (in general, in the host country, and under extreme conditions), why they should persist to stay, and whom to contact in the host country. Key facilitating career capital aspects were defined as knowing how to revise the business plans when needed and knowing why they left the home country, preferred the host country and should persist to stay there. Each unique aspect was mapped onto specific components of the context (home country, host country, profession) to add depth to the analyses.

Originality – The study contributes to the literature primarily by integrating career capital framework with different elements of the context. It also represents the first effort to adopt the framework to identify the critical career capital aspects of entrepreneur immigrants.

Keywords Entrepreneur immigrants, career capital, Covid-19, context

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

“We moved to the UK on Tuesday with our daughter, the schools closed on Friday, and the first lockdown was announced on Monday. We stayed in an Airbnb apartment for 37 days. We could not do anything other than grocery shopping for two months, while we had many items on our to-do list for the first couple of weeks.” (Respondent 1)

As a unique group, entrepreneur immigrants are defined as individuals who migrate to a new country to immediately start a business there (Butler *et al.*, 2003). Their immigration and adjustment process can be particularly risky since they are not protected by any organization’s support and are very susceptible to the impact of fluctuations in the context. However, despite the extensive literature on self-initiated expatriates (e.g., Shao and Al Ariss, 2020) entrepreneur immigrants represent an understudied group. This study aims to conduct an in-depth analysis of the determinants of the adjustment process, particularly career capital aspects, of a unique group of entrepreneur immigrants in a specific context focusing on holders of Turkish businessperson visa in the UK who migrated shortly before the announcement of the first lockdown due to Covid-19 on March 23rd 2020. This group had to live with an extremely high likelihood of immigration failure due to the challenges arising from the pandemic and lockdown conditions (Koker, 2020). Their experiences can guide entrepreneur immigrants and any self-initiated expatriate facing different challenges in various contexts.

Literature Review

Cross-cultural adjustment

Adjustment of expatriates and high-skilled immigrants to their host countries upon migration is the main determinant of success vs failure of the whole process. We can make a distinction between anticipatory adjustment prior to the move and in-country adjustment upon the arrival consisting of three facets; (i) *general adjustment* to the host country, (ii)

interaction adjustment related to the relationships with the host country nationals and (iii) *work adjustment* to the job and organization (particularly for corporate employees, rather than entrepreneurs) (Black *et al.*, 1991). An unsuccessful adjustment process may result in compulsory and involuntary return to the home country, and this is an undesired consequence for any immigrant, particularly during the early stages of the transition (Bhaskar-Shrinivas *et al.*, 2005; Bierwiazzonek and Waldzus, 2016). As the primary determinant of entrepreneur immigrants' route to stay in the host country, successful start of their businesses within the expected time frame is critical for the adjustment of this unique group.

Career capital framework

The career capital framework (Arthur *et al.*, 1999; DeFilippi and Arthur, 1996; Inkson and Arthur, 2001) building on the boundaryless career perspective (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996) makes a distinction between three key dimensions of knowing impacting career progression: knowing how; knowing why; knowing whom. *Knowing how* capital represents career and job-related skills, knowledge, abilities and insights relevant to the job characteristics. They are included in the category of behavioral competencies (Akkermans *et al.*, 2013) since they are directly required to perform well on the job. *Knowing why* capital is based on the career motivation and values of the individual, and can be included in the reflective competencies category (Akkermans *et al.*, 2013). Different aspects of this capital determine commitment and adaptability to a high extent since they define personal meaning and sense of purpose. Characteristics such as being open to experiences, having strong career insight, and having a proactive personality can also be considered as *knowing why* competencies (Eby *et al.*, 2003) since they provide a basis for career-related reflection (Akkermans *et al.*, 2013). Finally, *knowing whom* capital can be categorized among communicative competencies (Akkermans *et al.*, 2013) and consists of components such as

having career-relevant contacts and networks who may play a critical role in career progression (Arthur *et al.*, 1999; DeFilippi and Arthur, 1996; Inkson and Arthur, 2001).

This framework has been continuously adopted in research on global careers as a basis to examine the success and adjustment factors for expatriates and immigrants (e.g., Brown *et al.*, 2020; Dickmann *et al.*, 2018). There has been also a consistent effort to define more specific aspects of each dimension, particularly for expatriates (Brown *et al.*, 2020). On the other hand, the limited effort to define the key characteristics of entrepreneur immigrants focused either on their cross-cultural capabilities (Xu *et al.*, 2019) or educational background and work experience (Zolin and Schlosser, 2013) leading to success, while a comprehensive approach such as the career capital framework has not been adopted so far.

Impact of context

The value of studying the context has been highlighted recently in the literature, and a call was made to question the meaning of being a self-initiated expatriate in different contexts (Andresen *et al.*, 2020a; 2020b). The impact of context on careers is multilayered and can be quite complex, while analyses of differences in space (e.g., different home countries and host countries), time (e.g., life and career stage), and institutions (e.g., organizations and occupations) are expected to add depth and meaning to the research on self-initiated expatriates (Andresen *et al.*, 2020b). With a distilled approach, we can focus on three primary contextual factors in the study of expatriates; *home country, host country, and profession* (Andresen *et al.*, 2020a). However, the literature lacks an in-depth consideration of different contexts; for example, former research is criticized for relying primarily on studies of self-initiated expatriates with very similar backgrounds (i.e., coming from high-status home countries) received by culturally diverse and wealthy host countries (Lazarova and Ipek, 2020). Moreover, studies focusing on expatriates “in a single profession, from a single home

country in a single host country are extremely rare” (Andresen *et al.*, 2020a, p.192), demonstrating the significance of the present study.

Within the study of the contextual issues in expatriation, the impact of facing hostile environments at individual-, organizational-, and host country-level received particular attention (Faeth and Kittler, 2020; McNulty *et al.*, 2019). Expatriates’ safety is particularly at risk in unique contexts defined by medical emergencies, natural disasters, and man-made irregular- (e.g., terrorism) or regular (e.g., industrial accidents) crises (Fee *et al.*, 2013). Recently, Covid-19, has been experienced as a unique crisis or career shock event (Akkermans *et al.*, 2020) for expatriates and immigrants, where the expatriates constituted particularly vulnerable groups due to insufficient social networks and organizational support, along with other stressors (Gonzales *et al.*, 2022).

The Present Study

This study has three main theoretical contributions. First, with its quite specific scope, it provides a solid basis for an in-depth analysis of a unique context, in line with the strong need to fill the void in studies of expatriation. On the other hand, focusing on individual career capital aspects is distinct from the previous work on entrepreneur immigrants, which has focused primarily on the performance, success, and survival of their businesses (Lilius and Hewidy, 2019; Zolin and Schlosser, 2013), rather than explaining their career capitals with a broad perspective. Finally, combining these two theoretical motives, findings of the study provide a significant contribution by mapping the specific career capital aspects representing knowing how, why and whom onto three primary contextual factors; home country, host country, and profession (Andresen *et al.*, 2020a).

Methodology

The context of the study

Home country. Turkey has been characterized by growing polarization and tension between pro- and anti-government populations since 2000s. Due to internal and external political and economic issues and uncertainties, the country is losing a significant number of skilled employees to other countries. This trend is a result of serious concerns around freedom of speech, human rights, increased conservatism, and problems in the education system, accompanied by consistently increasing costs of living (Elveren and Toksoz, 2019; Gall, 2019).

Host country. The UK (particularly England) has been one of the most attractive destinations for Turkish immigrants for several reasons, such as ease of access to Turkey and knowing the language (Altinay and Altinay, 2008; Bilecen, 2020). As a result of the problems in Turkey, the number of applications for the Turkish businessperson visa per year has gradually increased from 62 in 2002 to 12,249 in 2019 (Bilecen, 2020), and 31,000 in 2020 (Erem, 2020). Apart from the unique characteristics of the culture, bureaucracy, rules, regulations, and pace of life in the UK, the host-country context was dominated by the Covid-19 pandemic for respondents of this study.

Profession. Applicants for the Turkish businessperson visa¹ prepare a proposal to start a small business, and the visa is granted to those with feasible and realistic plans. Initially, the business proposals are not scrutinized very stringently; for example, the success rate for the applications was 93% in 2019 (Bilecen, 2020). The proposed businesses can function in a variety of areas such as childcare, hairdressing, architecture, web design, consulting, etc. Recipients of the visa could move to the UK upon the approval of their visa, and they had to

¹ Due to Brexit, the UK does not accept any more applications for this visa since December 2020. However, in April 2023 they announced a new visa type (Innovator Founder Visa) with similar requirements open to citizens of any country.

start their business immediately. The business activity of their companies were supposed to go through strict government scrutiny at the end of their first year in the UK, and they could either stay for three more years (before another review which can lead to indefinite stay rights) or have to leave the country if they cannot succeed in their business plans (Altinay and Altinay, 2008). Since all respondents were within the first year of their stay in the UK, short-term survival in the UK (vs returning to Turkey) could be considered as an indicator of successful adjustment for this group.

Data collection

Potential participants were reached via online groups and communities of Turkish businessperson visa holders in the UK, specifically aiming to reach those who moved to the country after November 2019. The respondents who met the requirements were asked to fill out a survey via Qualtrics using the link on the call for participants. The interviews were held online and lasted from 30 to 60 minutes. The audio content of the interviews was recorded upon the consent of the respondents. The length of the verbatim transcripts ranged from 2908 words to 6481 words with an average of 4703. I conducted the semi-structured interviews in Turkish, as a native speaker. Theoretical basis (career capital framework) was not integrated into the interview structure to provide opportunities for receiving broader responses outside the boundaries of the framework. (See supplementary material for interview questions.)

Sample

The final sample consisted of ten respondents who were the primary holders of the Turkish businessperson visa rather than a family member who was defined as a dependant visa holder. Eight respondents were in a temporary survival phase and were still in the UK at the time of data collection. They were living through the uncertainty before their first-year evaluation and striving to start or develop their businesses under the conditions of the second lockdown which started in November 2020, when the interviews were being held. On the

other hand, two respondents were back in Turkey with no intention or hope of returning to the UK (see Table 1 for further details).

---- Insert Table 1 about here ----

Data analysis

Theoretical thematic analysis guided by existing theoretical concepts (Braun and Clarke, 2006) was conducted to identify the challenges and career capital aspects which impacted the adjustment (i.e., temporary survival or exit) of entrepreneur immigrants in the unique context of Covid-19. A primary theme was defined as adjustment challenges (Black *et al.*, 1991), and three further themes were defined as knowing how, knowing why, and knowing whom dimensions prior to analyses, in line with the career capital framework (Arthur *et al.*, 1999; DeFilippi and Arthur, 1996; Inkson and Arthur, 2001), with the aim of defining unique career capital aspects corresponding to each dimension. (See supplementary material for steps of analysis.)

Findings

Analyses showed that adjustment challenges consisted of two subthemes: general adjustment challenges and contextual adjustment challenges. Consistent with the cross-cultural adjustment models (e.g., Black *et al.*, 1991), these challenges were considered as broader issues impacting any recent immigrant in the host country. With regard to the entrepreneurial process, some of the key career capital aspects (i.e., subthemes for knowing how, why, and whom) served as hindering factors (due to their insufficiency or absence) while others served as facilitating factors (due to their presence). Particularly the hindering factors represented the unique context-dependent findings of this study, while the facilitating factors were highly aligned with former research on cross-cultural adjustment (Bhaskar-Shrinivas *et al.*, 2005; Bierwiazzonek and Waldzus, 2016; Black *et al.*, 1991) and push and

full factors (Baruch, 1995). (See Figure 1 for the theoretical map and Table 2 for the summary of findings).

---- Insert Figure 1 about here ----

Challenges to adjustment

General adjustment challenges. General adjustment challenges can be summarized as logistic difficulties (e.g., housing), communication issues, understanding the rules and pace of the bureaucratic procedures in the UK, lack of social and work-related networks and support, and the impact and advantages and disadvantages of migrating as a single person against doing so as a family, in line with the literature (Bhaskar-Shrinivas *et al.*, 2005; Bierwiazzonek and Waldzus, 2016; Black *et al.*, 1991).

Contextual adjustment challenges. As a consequence of the pandemic-dominated host country context, the primary stressor was the likelihood of getting infected in the host country where the immigrants lacked a support network and familiarity with the healthcare system. Meanwhile, the respondents also could not search for houses due to the lockdown conditions and almost all of them had to extend their stays in their temporary places for several months (which turned out to be a serious cost). In addition, the isolation and loneliness in their temporary locations, combined with the pressure of not being able to start their businesses, became a serious stressor, which also had psychosomatic consequences for a few respondents or their families.

Career capital aspects hindering entrepreneurial effort

Not knowing how to start a business. Independent of the pandemic-related challenges, a major problem arose from the fact that the respondents (except for two) had no former experience in starting a business, while it is the most critical skill for an entrepreneur in the context of this profession. They had left their jobs in public, private or family-owned companies behind and applied for this specific type of visa since it seemed like a feasible or

“worth the try” option for them to leave Turkey and migrate to the UK. One participant was a new graduate and had no work experience at all. Another participant, who also had no former experience in starting a business, used the phrase *cahil cesareti* (*courage of the ignorant*) to describe the prevalent characteristic of applicants and holders of this visa in a similar situation.

Not knowing how to start a business in the host country. In the context of the profession, we would naturally expect language skills as a primary need to succeed in a foreign country as an entrepreneur. Interestingly, half of the participants did not feel competent in English and reported significant problems in communication which hampered the steps of starting a business. Apart from the language issues, four participants clearly told that they had no or very limited awareness of the bureaucratic requirements or sector-related regulations in the host country context. Revealing the degree of unrealistic expectations, one participant articulated that he expected to have a “rose-colored life” in the UK.

This career capital aspect is highly relevant to the home country context as well. Almost all of the participants (except for one) worked with an agency in Turkey while preparing their business proposals. Such agencies were aware of the strong motive to leave Turkey and offered their services pragmatically, with minimum or no ethical responsibility. Their priority was selling their services and submitting visa applications that could pass the initial screening and grant the visa for the first year, as they did not have any concerns or responsibility about future success of the proposed jobs in the UK. Such agencies may have also benefited from lack of monitoring and regulations in Turkey.

Not knowing how to start a business under extreme conditions. As a consequence of the pandemic- and lockdown-based obstacles dominant in the host country context, all respondents faced severe problems in starting their businesses. They had major delays particularly in progressing with the bureaucratic steps, such as obtaining a national insurance

number, required for taxation and invoicing, building business networks, reaching out to potential customers, and looking for office or shop spaces. As a result of their unique professional context, two respondents (i.e., the personal care assistant and repairer) had the chance to build their businesses despite the pandemic since their specialty areas allowed for working under lockdown conditions. Few others (e.g., the florist) tried to start their businesses online but suffered from lack of former online sales experience.

Uncertainties around receiving governmental support (such as furlough schemes) and loan opportunities in the host country made the financial situation even more challenging. Only a few participants requested and used loans without any hesitation; others did not consider it, while it could have helped their survival and stay. The reason was either not being able to apply for such support due to lack of national insurance numbers or having concerns about its potential negative impact in the long run. There were rumors around the Turkish community that receiving financial support would negatively impact the Year-1 review of their businesses, since they would have to prove their success in starting their businesses as promised. The respondents were not clear if applying for loans would risk the evaluation of their work history for visa extension, and they were also not informed about the potential leniency and flexibility in the first-year evaluation.

As a consequence of these factors, seven respondents who were still in the UK at the time of the data collection emphasized reliance on their financial resources as the primary determinant of their stay there, particularly since they could not proceed with their business plans and start earning steady and satisfactory (or any) income, even towards the end of their first year. As an indicator of the importance of economic capital in the immigration process (Luthans *et al.*, 2004), spending their investment money on basic living costs risked the establishment of their businesses, decreasing their chances for staying in the UK.

“Living in this desperation is unbearable. I feel like a prisoner; I can’t work here, and I can’t return to Turkey either. I don’t know anyone here, and I am out of money now.” (Respondent 2)

Not knowing why they should persist to stay in the host country. Regardless of the strength of their initial desire to immigrate to and stay in the UK, a few respondents started questioning their decisions. As a consequence of the loneliness and isolation felt in the host country context under pandemic conditions, they developed concerns about being an immigrant and also negative perceptions about the host country. The primary source of these perceptions was the lack of government support schemes covering this immigrant group and uncertainties about the loans offered by the government, as explained above. At the same time, a few respondents were resentful, especially since they felt like they were being punished for trying to follow the rules and avoiding any illegal work or documentation, while other visa holders with those tendencies (or opportunities) seemed to be in better standing in terms of being granted their visa extensions.

“We could not reach the authorities, and we could not benefit from any financial aid. People kept asking each other on Facebook groups to check if anyone had any information or could provide support. I just wish the government had heard our voice.” (Respondent 4)

“I think I would have been a good citizen if I could have succeeded in staying. People like me who went by the book could not stay in the UK, while those who got involved in illegal work did. I think Home Office should have aimed for not losing people like me.” (Respondent 3)

While going through these challenges, home country context was also influential in entrepreneur immigrants’ judgments. Families and friends in Turkey were either expecting or directly asking them to return and several respondents reported the burden of this pressure. Given the highly collectivistic culture of Turkey, disappointing the families or other social

groups seemed as a major issue, and such feelings made negative perceptions of the UK and being an immigrant even stronger.

“My dad told that I ruined my life by leaving everything I had behind; my successful career, my friends, my life in Istanbul, my earnings... Hearing this was devastating; it was so harsh! I was already questioning my life here...” (Respondent 4)

Not knowing whom to contact in the host country. Four respondents actively sought psychological or financial support to get through the process with relative ease or find people who could help them for their businesses. The support could have been in the form of reaching out to the online formal or informal support groups in the UK or asking families in Turkey for financial help. Despite this effort, the help received particularly from the potential key contacts located in the UK was totally insufficient, leading to an overall disappointment with the Turkish diaspora there. This finding can be explained by the host country context since everyone was shocked and impacted by the pandemic and this may have significantly decreased the willingness or motivation to support unfamiliar newcomers. The respondents also reported serious problems in knowing how to reach key people representing authorities, especially to inquire about potential government support during the lockdown.

Career capital aspects facilitating entrepreneurial effort

Knowing how to revise the business plans when needed. In relation to the context of the profession, the critical step was thinking of alternative plans and revising the business plan slightly, with a flexible mindset. Almost all respondents declared that they revisited their expectations and reduced the scope of their business-related goals and aspirations. Three respondents started their businesses with a purely online approach, while one of them also saw these conditions as an opportunity to develop their skills via online courses (i.e., marketing training) consistent with the trend during the pandemic. As another solution, three respondents traveled back to Turkey (once the flights became available) to spend the summer

there, to relax for a while and save some money. Seven respondents frankly shared that they considered doing unregistered work during the crisis to obtain income or create “fake invoices” to have proof that their businesses were running. However, most of them avoided such methods since it would be a major risk and negatively impact their visa extension if they were caught by the authorities.

“I was planning to provide career consulting and coaching, based on my former HR experience. However, my potential clients had lost their interest in using such services under pandemic and lockdown conditions. I have just started getting involved in volunteer work in my area, to keep this rolling.” (Respondent 6)

Knowing why left the home country. As we would expect, the home country context before, during and (potentially) after the pandemic was also highly influential in the judgments and decisions of the respondents, as a strong push factor (Baruch, 1995). Before the pandemic, they had compelling motives to leave Turkey due to serious concerns about at least one of the following issues; the political and economic environment, problems in the education system, threats against freedom of speech, or mistreatment of ethnic and religious minority groups. During the pandemic, they were also comparing how the two countries managed the crisis. Respondents also had serious concerns about the state of Turkey's economy after the pandemic, and this expectation increased their willingness to put more effort into staying in the UK. Six respondents directly criticized Turkey's policies and practices regarding the management of the pandemic, thus reported greater health-related concerns about the home country. One key issue was, for example, about the reported number of Covid-19 cases; they did not trust the daily numbers announced by the Turkish government, while they did not have such a distrust in the public figures in the UK. Consequently, returning to Turkey during or after the pandemic was defined as a “last

resort”, “an enormous waste of time, effort and financial resources” or an “immense disappointment” by those respondents, and impacted their willingness to survive and stay in the UK. However, a few others viewed (potential) return as their destiny and seemed to have a higher level of acceptance of such a consequence, which may have reduced their willingness to put further effort to survive and stay.

“I returned to Turkey since I could not stay here anymore. When I returned, I was assuming that I would never be back in the UK. I was devastated because I did not want to live in Turkey anymore. I could not even describe why London was so appealing for me; it might be the freedom or diversity. I’m back now – Thank God!” (Respondent 7)

Knowing why they preferred the host country. Consistent with their initial expectations from the host country serving as pull factors (Baruch, 1995), six respondents had a more positive view of the way the pandemic had been handled by the British government (in comparison to Turkey), and they seemed to trust the health system as well, while a few respondents had concerns about it. The main factor increasing the respondents' willingness to stay in the UK was their trust in the country's financial power and belief that the economy would survive this crisis successfully so that the respondents could also proceed with their business plans afterwards.

“I play by the rules. I do everything I can, in line with the requirements of this visa. I don't think the UK will let us down, after all this effort.” (Respondent 8)

Knowing why they should persist to stay in the host country. The final career capital aspect was resilience, as a factor primarily at the individual level, rather than the contextual level. The strength of this psychological capital (Luthans *et al.*, 2004) impacted the motivation to stay in the UK despite the challenges and extreme conditions. The respondents

with visibly higher levels of resilience defined themselves to have key characteristics such as optimism and perseverance. As another determinant of resilience, perception of different aspects of the overall experience also played a critical role in the immigrants' progression in the UK during the pandemic, and those perceptions were guided by two key tendencies: fatalism and acceptance. The respondents who were more content with their “destinies” seemed to have more positive perceptions of the whole experience. They were also less critical about the key actors (e.g., the government representatives) or potential negative consequences of the pandemic (i.e., health issues or immigration failure).

“We never lost our hope – we trusted in ourselves and in the power and economy of this country – still do. (...) I left everything behind to come here and believe that we will succeed here. We took risks, but I believe it will be worth it at the end.” (Respondent 5)

“I have done my best, I have tried anything I could do. Now I am just fine with whatever awaits me – I’m OK with my destiny.” (Respondent 2)

---- Insert Table 2 about here ----

Discussion

Theoretical implications

The findings of the study contribute to the literature on entrepreneur immigrants and self-initiated expatriation in different but expected ways, in line with the main aims. First, the in-depth analysis of the specific contextual factors revealed the process a specific group of immigrants go through during their transition and adjustment. The unique findings supported the argument that we need to examine the expatriates’ and immigrants’ specific contexts and avoid making generalizations building on research utilizing samples with mixed combinations of the home country, host country, and professional contexts (Andresen *et al.*, 2020a). The career capital aspects defined in this study can be generalized to different groups

of self-initiated expatriates or immigrants to some extent, depending on their contexts. However, the findings could have been also quite different for different groups of immigrants representing different contextual backgrounds.

It should be also noted that while a three-factor conceptualization might be an efficient approach in early research, context of careers in general as well as for self-initiated expatriation is more complicated (Andresen *et al.*, 2020a, 2020b), as suggested in the findings of this study as well. Thus, future research may aim for a broader analysis of other contextual factors such as time (ahead of the first year upon arrival), language (a factor that was mentioned by several respondents in this study), cultural distance (e.g., differences in the pace of life), and life and career stages (e.g., the impact of having a child on the decision to migrate).

Moreover, the examination of context also means an analysis of personal initiative and individual factors such as self-starting behavior, proactivity, and persistence in relation to the elements of context (Andresen *et al.*, 2020a). The findings also showed the importance of psychological capital (Luthans *et al.*, 2004); individual characteristics such as resilience, optimism and perseverance as well as help-seeking behaviors with a proactive approach were critical. Thus, future research on context should not undermine the individual factors but aim for a better analysis of them as context-dependent elements in the study of expatriation.

The most significant contribution of this study is the integration of the career capital framework (Arthur *et al.*, 1999; DeFilippi and Arthur, 1996; Inkson and Arthur, 2001) with three specific contextual factors defining the immigration process for a unique immigrant group (Andresen *et al.*, 2020a). The findings showed that different components of each career capital aspect might be relevant to or be a result of different contextual factors, which can only be examined with a close look at the specific characteristics of the context. Thus, future

research should focus on further context-dependent exploration of the career capitals of expatriates and immigrants.

As the final contribution, findings also revealed that the career capital framework (Arthur *et al.*, 1999; DeFilippi and Arthur, 1996; Inkson and Arthur, 2001) is a solid basis for exploring the career capital of entrepreneur immigrants, while it has not been adopted for this group before. However, given the very specific sample of this study, future research should expand the effort to various entrepreneur immigrant groups. In addition to the career capital aspects defined in this study, previously developed sets of key characteristics for self-initiated expatriates (e.g., Dickmann *et al.*, 2018) or entrepreneur immigrants (e.g., cross-cultural capabilities; Xu *et al.*, 2019) can guide future research.

Practical implications

Entrepreneur immigrants' unique conditions, particularly due to the lack of any organizational support and a very strong need for career self-management, in line with the protean career perspective (Hall, 1996) make the research on this group distinct from former work on self-initiated expatriates (e.g., Makkonen, 2016). Given that the entrepreneur immigrants do not have any sponsors and organizational support mechanisms like assigned or self-initiated expatriates, there should be a better effort to improve their safety nets in the host country. Government-led pro-immigrant business programs have been suggested as critical mechanisms for survival of immigrant entrepreneurs (Chrysostome, 2010), and the findings of this study also unveiled the importance of such efforts, especially in a context dominated by a global crisis.

Limitations

The sample size is the major limitation of this study, but it can be justified by the fact that the target was a unique group with strict participation criteria as a result of the nature, scope, and purpose of the study. During data collection, I also noticed that the visa holders

who returned to Turkey did not prefer to participate; the two exceptions were included in the sample through close personal contacts. However, saturation in responses was observed in the second half of the interviews. Nevertheless, the low sample size and very specific characteristics of the respondents may limit the generalizability of the results, but this scope provided an excellent opportunity for in-depth analysis of the contextual factors for a single profession, single home country and single host country, in line with the primary aim of the study and the need in the literature (Andresen *et al.*, 2020a, 2020b).

Another major limitation can be the subjective nature of the study due to the researcher's identity. Being a Turkish immigrant and skilled worker visa holder in the UK during the pandemic (with a steady job and income), I became aware of the Turkish businessperson visa holders' extraordinary challenges via social media, and it was my primary motive for conducting this study. The research assistants were selected as students based in Turkey to balance the potential issues with subjectivity, while it is acceptable and not a major risk factor in qualitative research. On the other hand, the in-depth analysis of the home and host country contexts would have been quite challenging for a researcher with a different background.

References

- Akkermans, J., Brenninkmeijer, V., Huibers, M., and Blonk, R. W. (2013), "Competencies for the contemporary career: Development and preliminary validation of the career competencies questionnaire", *Journal of Career Development*, Vol. 40 No. 3, pp. 245-267.
- Akkermans, J., Richardson, J. and Kraimer, M.L. (2020), "The Covid-19 crisis as a career shock: Implications for careers and vocational behavior", *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, Vol. 119, Article 103434.
- Altinay, L. and Altinay, E. (2008), "Factors influencing business growth: The rise of Turkish entrepreneurship in the UK", *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*, Vol. 14 No. 1, pp. 24-26.
- Andresen, M., Pattie, M.W. and Hippler, T. (2020a), "What does it mean to be a 'self-initiated' expatriate in different contexts? A conceptual analysis and suggestions for future research", *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, Vol. 31 No. 1, pp. 174-201.
- Andresen, M., Brewster, C. and Suutari, V. (2020b). "Recognising space, time, and institutions in self-initiated expatriation research", in Andresen, M., Brewster, C. and Suutari, V. (Eds), *Self-Initiated Expatriates in Context: Recognising Space, Time, and Institutions*, Routledge, New York, pp 1-16.
- Arthur, M.B., Inkson, K. and Pringle, J.K. (1999), *The New Careers, Individual Action and Economic Change*, Sage, London.
- Arthur, M. B., and Rousseau, D. M. (1996), *The boundaryless career: A new employment principle for a new organizational era*, Oxford University Press, New York.
- Baruch, Y. (1995), "Business globalization—the human resource management aspect", *Human Systems Management*, Vol. 14 No. 4, pp. 313-326.
- Bhaskar-Shrinivas, P., Harrison, D. A., Luk, D. M. and Shaffer, M.A. (2005), "Input-based and time-based models of international adjustment: Meta-analytic evidence and theoretical extensions", *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol. 48 No. 2, pp. 257–281.
- Bierwaczzonek, K. and Waldzus, S. (2016), "Socio-cultural factors as antecedents of cross-cultural adaptation in expatriates, international students, and migrants: A review", *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, Vol. 47 No. 6, pp. 767-817.

- Bilecen, T. (2020), *Migration from Turkey to the United Kingdom : From political asylum to Ankara Agreement*, Press Dionysus, London.
- Black, J. S., Mendenhall, M. and Oddou, G. (1991), “Toward a comprehensive model of international adjustment: An integration of multiple theoretical perspectives”, *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 16 No. 2, pp. 291–317.
- Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006), “Using thematic analysis in psychology”, *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, Vol. 3 No. 2, pp. 77-101.
- Brown, C., Hooley, T. and Wond, T. (2020), “Building career capital: Developing business leaders' career mobility”; *Career Development International*, Vol. 25 No. 5, pp.445-459.
- Butler, J. E., Brown, B. and Chamornmarn. (2003), “Informational networks, entrepreneurial actions and performance”, *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*, Vol. 20 No. 2, pp. 151-174.
- Chrysostome, E. (2010), “The success factors of necessity immigrant entrepreneurs: In search of a model”, *Thunderbird International Business Review*, Vol. 52 No. 2, pp.137-152.
- DeFillippi, R.J. and Arthur, M.B. (1994), “The boundaryless career: A competency-based perspective”, *Journal of Organisational Behavior*, Vol. 15, pp. 307-324.
- Dickmann, M., Suutari, V., Brewster, C., Mäkelä, L., Tanskanen, J. and Tornikoski, C. (2018), “The career competencies of self-initiated and assigned expatriates: Assessing the development of career capital over time”, *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, Vol. 29 No.16, pp. 2353-2371.
- Eby, L. T., Butts, M. and Lockwood, A. (2003), “Predictors of success in the era of the boundaryless career”, *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, Vol. 24 No. 6, pp. 689-708.
- Elveren, A. Y. and Toksoz, G. (2019), “Hidden gender dimensions of the brain drain: The case of Turkey”, *New Perspectives on Turkey*, Vol. 60 No. 1, pp. 33-59.
- Erem, O. (2020, December 8). Applications for Ankara Agreement - Breaking Records. *BBC Turkish*. Available at <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-dunya-55224051>
- Faeth, P. C. and Kittler, M. G. (2020), “Expatriate management in hostile environments from a multi-stakeholder perspective—a systematic review”, *Journal of Global Mobility: The Home of Expatriate Management Research*, Vol. 8 No. 1, pp. 1-24.
- Fee, A., McGrath-Champ, S. and Liu, H. (2013), “Human resources and expatriate evacuation: A conceptual model”, *Journal of Global Mobility: The Home of Expatriate Management Research*, Vol. 1 No.3, pp. 246–263.

- Gall, C. (2019, January 2). Spurning Erdogan's vision, Turks leave in droves, draining money and talent. *New York Times*. Available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/02/world/europe/turkey-emigration-erdogan.html>
- González, J. M. R., Barker, M. and Shah, D. (2021), "COVID-19 and self-initiated expatriate health workers: Spanish nurses in Germany", *Journal of Global Mobility: The Home of Expatriate Management Research*, Vol. 10 No.2, pp. 242 – 264.
- Hall, D. T. (1996), "Protean careers of the 21st century", *Academy of Management Executive*, Vol. 10 No. 4, pp. 8–16.
- Inkson, K. and Arthur, M. (2001), "How to be a successful career capitalist", *Organizational Dynamics*, Vol. 30 No. 1, pp. 48-58.
- Järllström, M., Brandt, T., and Rajala, A. (2020), "The relationship between career capital and career success among Finnish knowledge workers", *Baltic Journal of Management*, Vol.15 No.5., pp. 687-706.
- Köker; I. (2020), "Coronavirus: The Stories of Turkish Businessperson visa holders who lost their incomes but can not return to Turkey", *BBC Turkish*. Available at <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-dunya-52381417>
- Lazarova, M. and Ipek, E. (2020), "Home country' in studies of self-initiated expatriates", in Andresen, M., Brewster, C. and Suutari, V. (Eds), *Self- Initiated Expatriates in Context: Recognizing Space, Time, and Institutions*, Routledge, New York, pp. 19-37.
- Lilius, J. and Hewidy, H. (2019), "Serving whom? Immigrant entrepreneurs in a new local context", *Fennia: International Journal of Geography*, Vol. 197 No. 2, pp. 215-231.
- Luthans, F., Luthans, K., and Luthans, B.C. (2004), "Positive psychological capital: Beyond human and social capital", *Business Horizons*, Vol. 47 No. 1, pp. 45-50.
- Makkonen, P. (2016), "Career self-management behaviour of Western self-initiated expatriates in local organizations in China", *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, Vol. 27 No. 11, pp. 1135-1157.
- McNulty, Y., Luring, J., Jonasson, C. and Selmer, J. (2019), "Highway to Hell? Managing expatriates in crisis", *Journal of Global Mobility: The Home of Expatriate Management Research*, Vol. 7 No. 2, pp. 157-180.
- Shao, J.J. and Al Ariss, A. (2020), "Knowledge transfer between self-initiated expatriates and their organizations: Research propositions for managing SIEs", *International Business Review*, Vol. 29 No. 1, Article 101634.

- Xu, K., Drennan, J. and Mathews, S. (2019), "Immigrant entrepreneurs and their cross-cultural capabilities: A study of Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in Australia", *Journal of International Entrepreneurship*, Vol. 17 No. 4, pp. 520-557.
- Zolin, R. and Schlosser, F. (2013), "Characteristics of immigrant entrepreneurs and their involvement in international new ventures", *Thunderbird International Business Review*, Vol. 55 No. 3, pp. 271-284.

Table 1

Respondent Characteristics

	Age	Gender	Marital	Child	Education	Planned Business	Date of Entry to the UK	Location at the Time of the Interview
R1	40	F	Married	1	University	Floral Shop	March 2020	UK
R2	30	M	Single	-	Vocational School	Trade (dry food)	February 2020	Turkey
R3	50	F	Single	-	University	Consulting	November 2019	Turkey
R4	30	F	Single	-	University	Sales Consulting	January 2020	UK
R5	38	M	Married	1	University	Landscape Design	December 2019	UK
R6	36	F	Married	-	Masters Degree	HR Consulting	January 2020	UK
R7	24	F	Single	-	University	Architecture	December 2019	UK
R8	39	M	Married	1	Vocational School	Repair Services	March 2020*	UK
R9	44	F	Divorced	1	Masters Degree	Consulting	December 2019	UK
R10	44	M	Married	2	University	Patient Care	April 2020	UK

* The visa of this participant was granted in March 2020 and he had to postpone his entry until August 2020

Table 2

Critical Career Capital Aspects for Entrepreneur Immigrants in an Extreme Context

		Contextual Factors		
		<u>Home Country</u>	<u>Host Country</u>	<u>Profession</u>
Career Capital Aspects (CCAs)	(Hindering due to) Not Knowing	<i>CCA 1 : How to start a business</i>		
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Former experience in family business only - Former experience in private or public sector only - No work experience at all
		<i>CCA 2 : How to start a business in the host country</i>		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Misguidance from agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of preparation and knowledge - Unrealistic expectations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of language skills
		<i>CCA 3 : How to start a business under extreme conditions</i>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Delays in bureaucratic steps - Uncertainties and problems in getting support from the government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Barriers due to the nature of proposed business 		
Career Capital Aspects (CCAs)	(Facilitating due to) Knowing	<i>CCA 4 : Why they should persist to stay in the host country</i>		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pressure from families and friends in the home country 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Questioning the host country - Questioning being an immigrant - Concerns around unethical or illegal work 	
		<i>CCA 5 : Whom to contact in the host country</i>		
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of network - Disappointment with home country diaspora - Not being able to reach relevant authorities 	
		<i>CCA 6 : How to revise the business plans when needed</i>		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Considering alternative plans - Changing the scope - Investing in professional development 		
Career Capital Aspects (CCAs)	(Facilitating due to) Knowing	<i>CCA 7 : Why they left the home country</i>		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Concerns about the overall context and progression of the home country - Concerns about the present and future of the home country due to the pandemic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The potential impact of the pandemic on the host country (vs. the home country) 	
		<i>CCA 8 : Why they preferred the host country</i>		
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Trust in financial power and future of the host country 	
		<i>CCA 9 : Why they should persist to stay in the host country</i>		
	-----Relevant only at the individual level-----			

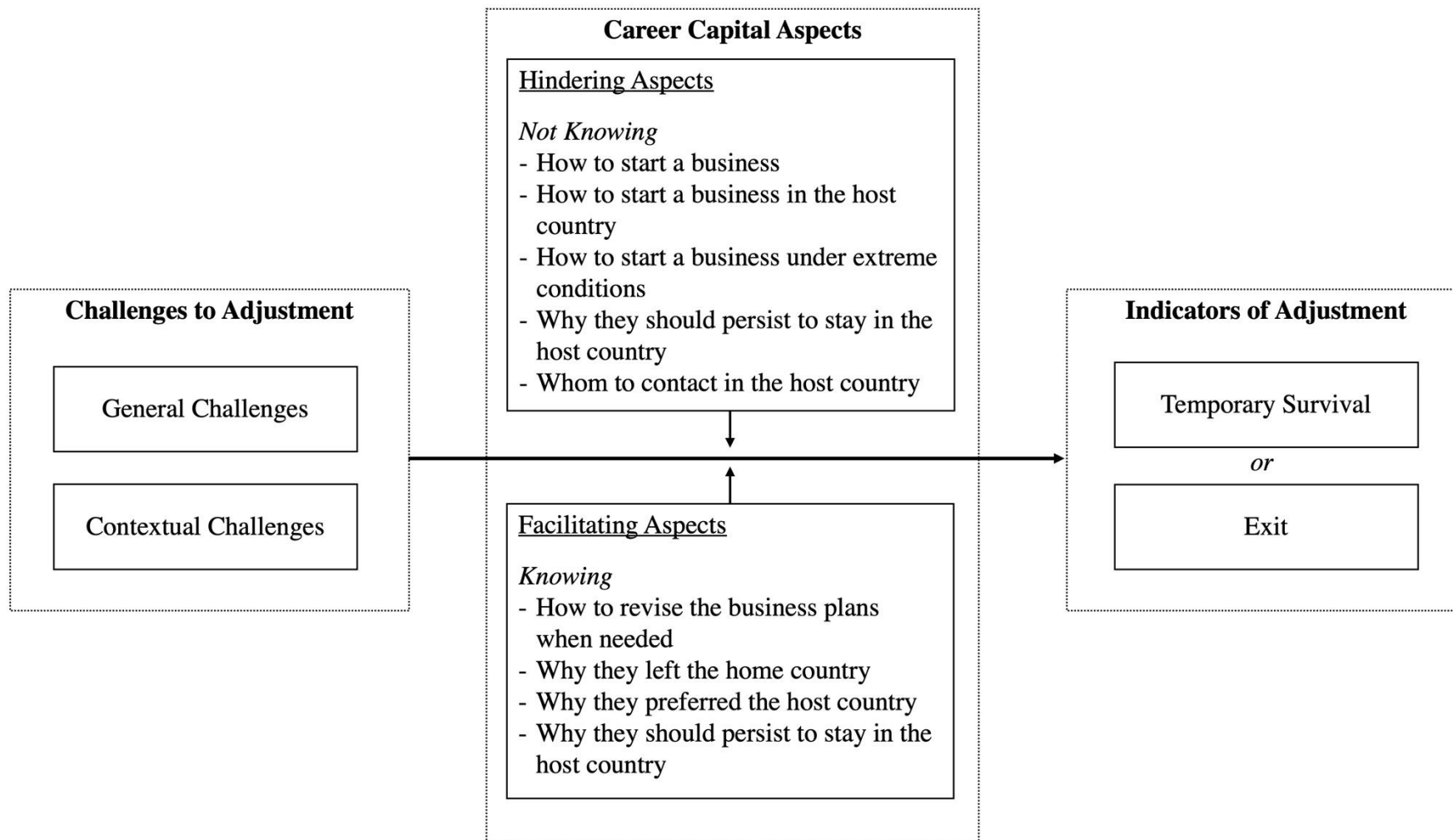


Figure 1. Theoretical Map of the Findings