

Institutional Logics and Its Application in Entrepreneurship Research

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Abstract: Institutional logic theory, a pivotal framework within organizational studies, delineates the multifaceted and intricate logics that underpin organizational fields. This theoretical perspective elucidates the manner in which diverse individuals or groups within an organization internalize and manifest distinct institutional logics, alongside the ensuing political and cultural conflicts. Furthermore, the theory endeavors to elucidate the complexities inherent in institutional logic across organizational fields, examining the reflection of these logics among various individuals or groups and their associated political and cultural dichotomies. Central to this discourse is the acknowledgment of the core systems that constitute the fabric of a country, encompassing the state, market, familial structures, corporate entities, professional bodies, and religious institutions. These components not only coexist with inherent conflicts but also exhibit a high degree of interdependence, underlined by their shared institutional logics. This literature attempts to review and analysis institutional logic in the field of entrepreneurship and integrates institutional logic into entrepreneurs' personal background, experience, and other social characteristics, and study how institutional logic operates. It is recommended that future researchers take entrepreneurs as the research object and conduct more in-depth research on the evolution of organizational response strategies when political and cultural conflicts occur between different groups within the enterprise, combined with institutional logic theory.

Keywords: Institutional logic; Entrepreneurship; Entrepreneur

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1. Introduction

The review uses critical and descriptive research methods to review the theory of institutional logics, discusses the necessity and key issues of applying this theory to entrepreneurship, explains how various institutional logics interact and the coping strategies of entrepreneurs and their businesses. This article employs both critical and descriptive research methodologies to undertake an analysis of institutional logic theory. This theory is primarily concerned with delineating the myriad complex institutional logics that permeate the organizational field. Furthermore, it explores the manner in which diverse individuals or groups within an organization internalize

and exhibit distinct institutional logics, alongside navigating the resultant political and cultural conflicts. In the entrepreneurship field, institutional logic needs more studies as the personal traits for entrepreneurs themselves, such as their residence state, family background, personality, life experiences, may influence the extent of success not only their own life but also the companies they have created. Additionally, the internal running models for the organizational structure and operational principles of those enterprises should also be closely examined regarding the institutional logic.

The review is intended to be a scholastic review with the main purpose of systematically studying institutional logic in entrepreneurship. The reason to make a scholastic rather than interventionist review is due to the academic nature of the literature and the discussion and exploration nature for further research opportunities. The review has no intention to draw conclusions on practical problems. The main methodology employed in the construction of the argument in this review is based on an inductive method, which seeks to build from the observations to the theory rather than deductive hypothesis testing or quantitative methods. The review is conducted as follows: First, the general institutional logic theory is reviewed and summarized; Second, the application of institutional logic in entrepreneurship field is reviewed. The general institutional logic in entrepreneurship is discussed first, such as the complexity and environmental factors, with two main topic covered next, namely institutional logics for entrepreneurship teams and hybrid organizations. The research is intended to be descriptive and critical with study of the current and historical research on institutional logic first, and attempts to find out the gap later.

2. Research methodology

This study employs a systematic literature review combined with an analytical approach to explore the concept of institutional logics in entrepreneurship. The methodology is meticulously designed to ensure rigor, comprehensiveness, and relevance, addressing both theoretical and empirical gaps in the existing body of knowledge.

For literature search, to construct a foundational understanding of institutional logics within the entrepreneurship context, a comprehensive literature search was conducted. The databases searched include IEEE, Springer, JSTOR, and specific academic libraries, chosen for their extensive coverage of management and entrepreneurship research. The search terms used were “institutional logic,” “entrepreneurship,” and combinations thereof, with filters applied to include documents published within the last ten years to ensure timeliness. The selection criteria focused on articles that are peer-reviewed, authoritative, and have a significant citation impact. Duplicate studies were excluded, and a final set of over 50 seminal articles was identified for in-depth review from the rough number of over 260,000 articles relating to the topics.

The cited literature within the document spans a range of publication years, reflecting a broad spectrum of research on institutional logics and entrepreneurship. From the 1970s to 1990s, early foundational works such as Meyer and Rowan (1977) and North (1990) are included in this review, indicating that the paper draws on seminal theories and concepts that have shaped the understanding of institutional theory and organizational behavior over decades^[1, 2]. In the 2000s, several key studies from the early 2000s are reviewed, including Lounsbury and Glynn (2001), and McPherson and Sauder (2013), which marks a significant expansion in the exploration of institutional logics, with researchers delving into the complexities of institutional dynamics and their impact on organizations^[3, 4]. In the 2010s, a substantial portion of the cited literature comes from the 2010s, such as Pache and Santos (2010), Dunn and Jones (2010), and Greenwood *et al.* (2011)^[5-7]. This period represents a maturation of research in the

field, with studies addressing the nuanced interplay of multiple institutional logics, the emergence of new logics, and their implications for organizational strategy and entrepreneurship. From the late 2010s to the early 2020s, the inclusion of literatures, such as Paoletta and Durand (2016) and Lee *et al.* (2017), suggests that the paper integrates the most current insights and debates in the field ^[8, 9]. This period is characterized by an increased focus on the practical implications of institutional logics for entrepreneurship, innovation, and corporate social responsibility.

For literature analysis, the selected literature underwent a rigorous thematic analysis to identify recurring themes, concepts, and gaps in the current understanding of institutional logics in entrepreneurship. This process involved summarizing the literature based on predefined and emergent categories, facilitating a structured synthesis of the findings. For empirical insights, where available, the contents of the papers were analyzed using content analysis methods to extract patterns, trends, and relationships that inform the interplay between institutional logics and entrepreneurial activities.

Furthermore, to ensure the rigor and validity of the literature review, multiple strategies were employed. These included cross-referencing findings across different sources, critically evaluating the methodologies of the selected studies, and engaging in discussions with subject matter experts to validate the interpretation of the data. The analytical process was iterative, allowing for continuous refinement of themes and insights based on a comprehensive understanding of the literature.

For a systematic review of institutional logic on entrepreneurship, based on the concepts and origins of institutional logic and the broad application on entrepreneurship, two types of organizations have been on review focus, small startup organizations and hybrid organizations. This is the same as the life span for companies. For startups, the origination team building the organization could be of critical importance. With further expansion, single business startups may experience diversification on their business and productions, which may add complexity and multiple logics on their organizations. Other sorting methods may also be valid, such as divide by industry, but this may ignore the common characteristics for companies during growth. Therefore, growth phase is selected after reviewing the concepts of institutional logic and its broad application in entrepreneurship studies.

3. Literature review

3.1. The development and changes of institutional logics

Institutional logic is not only a social-level phenomenon, but also manifests itself at different levels such as industries, organizations, and inter-organizations. According to Haveman and Gualtieri (2017), institutional logic is the way that individuals, teams, and organizations evaluate their daily activities and give meaning to these activities ^[10]. Institutional logic is a system of cultural elements that includes cultural elements such as values and expectations, and these elements are closely connected to form a highly consistent and logical system. The two perspectives of institutional logic and new institutionalism have certain similarities. The structural mechanism of the core institutional logic of the modern social institutional system at the social level, and took the lead in proposing the concept of institutional logic. Scholars have emphasized that “country”, “market”, and “family” are interdependent and conflicting entities, as well as “profession” and “company” are also included. Institutional logic provides behavioral norms and organizational principles for individuals and organizations, and provide the basis for perceptions and assumptions, prescriptions, norms, and beliefs. On the basis of previous work, scholars have further explored various mechanisms such as the interaction and alternation of institutional logic at the “organizational field” level. This results in differentiation rather than homogeneity of organizational practices,

which is the result of conflicting core institutions at the social level.

Lee *et al.* believe that different institutional logics that appear at the “field”, “society”, and “community” levels will change due to different historical and cultural situations ^[11]. In addition, Lee *et al.*, (2017) and McPherson *et al.* (2013) believe that organizations and individuals, as actors, will use their own initiative to interpret, deduce, or choose institutional logic out of their own interests and strategic goals ^[4, 9]. Therefore, institutions’ Logical theory is also a cross-level theoretical framework.

The research of Selznick (1948), an early institutional scholar found that an organization is not a completely closed system, and its development will be affected by the surrounding environment ^[12]. On this basis, the new institutional theory points out that the environment facing organizational development includes not only the technical environment, but also the institutional environment. If an organization wants to gain legitimacy from its environment, it must obey the requirements of the institutional environment in the field (Meyer 1977) ^[1]. For example, the study by Scott *et al.* found that as the government and the market replaced doctors as the dominant players in the medical industry, medical companies’ own positioning and corporate strategies have undergone significant changes ^[13]. Dunn and Jones found that due to the involvement of different interest groups, multiple institutional logics coexisted in the American medical education industry, and changes in these institutional logics led to dynamic tensions within the organization ^[6]. Greenwood *et al.*’s research on Spanish companies also showed that differences in local corporate organizational structures and behaviors are caused by the gradual dominance of market logic ^[7]. Both family logic and local government logic will respond, and the restrictive influence that institutions exert on organizations will force organizations within the same institutional domain to converge. Greenwood’s (2011) recent research focuses on the differentiated institutional environment issues behind different corporate strategic behaviors, and further analyzes the impact of institutional complexity on corporate strategy ^[7]. Hoffman’s (1999) early research on institutional logic conflicts argued that when one logic dominates, institutional conflicts will essentially disappear ^[14]. Nigam & Ocasio (2010) believe that when external environmental conditions change, enterprises will change their dominant logic, evolve in a direction more conducive to their own development, and form a new institutional logic ^[15].

The goal of institutional logic theory is to study and explore changes in different organizational fields and practices, on the one hand to study their complex mechanisms of action, and on the other hand to study their differentiated impacts. Early research on institutional logic mainly focused on the process of change and transformation. For example, for each organizational field, there will be the most mainstream institutional logic in different historical processes. The field level may undergo fundamental changes and transformations because it may be replaced by new institutional logics when it reaches the next historical stage, with representative works from Haveman *et al.* and so on ^[16]. By studying the milestones of different American companies analyze the logic of how different professional managers developed their companies in different periods. For example, different CEOs may, at different stages of enterprise development, emphasize manufacturing, marketing, and finally finance. The alternation of these two logics corresponds to the changing organizational methods of enterprises ^[17]. It analyzes how changes in the company’s institutional logic affect the succession of the company’s general manager. Scholars have studied some of the institutional logics of the American publishing industry. They first shifted from elite editor-centered institutional logic to market share-centered institutional logic, and explained how this shift affects the selection of successors.

In the subsequent theoretical development, Greenwood *et al.* proposed a new concept of institutions and pointed out that there will be opposition and conflicts between multiple coexisting institutional logics, which

is the “complexity” of institutions ^[7]. Lounsbury’s study reveals the opposition and conflicts between multiple coexisting institutional logics within the mutual fund industry, particularly highlighting the contrasting trustee and performance logics rooted in Boston and New York, respectively ^[18]. First is trustee logic, which emphasizes passive investing strategies and prioritizes low-cost money management. The second is performance logic, underscoring the importance of outperforming competitors through higher short-term annualized returns. The coexistence of these two logics creates a dynamic tension within the industry, influencing decision-making, strategy formulation, and the diffusion of practices among mutual funds. Funds aligned with the trustee logic might resist adopting practices that are perceived to increase risk, while those influenced by the performance logic might prioritize innovative strategies to enhance returns. The institutional logic dynamics herein challenges the traditional two-stage model of institutional diffusion by demonstrating how multiple forms of rationality can coexist and shape the evolution of organizational fields.

In another study by Dunn, similar institutional logic conflicts appears between care and science logics, the persistence over time, and their dynamic interplay on the education and training of future medical professionals ^[6]. The care logic emphasizes empathy, patient-centeredness, and the holistic treatment of patients, whereas the science logic prioritizes technological advancements, research, and evidence-based medicine. Several factors contribute to the tension and competition between these logics. Jurisdictional competition with proximate fields such as public health and the augmented influx of women into medical schools are associated with an intensified focus on the care logic. In contrast, the differentiation in the missions of medical schools may precipitate a diminished emphasis on the science logic. This dynamic interplay reflects the complex forces shaping the priorities and orientations within the medical educational sphere.

By studying core institutions with different cultures, such as countries, companies, churches, and families, scholars have found that culture is one of the causes of differences and conflicts in organizational practices. By comparing stock exchanges in different countries, it was concluded that there may be a competitive relationship between the government and professional financial practitioners, and the policy implementation of the Securities Regulatory Commission will also be affected by these economic professionals. Therefore, the conclusion is that there is a negative correlation between the state’s administrative capabilities and the protection of the rights and interests of small and medium-sized shareholders. Through research on family businesses, it was found that family members will crowd out professional managers.

3.2. Institutional logic in entrepreneurship

When social actors legally conform to established social logics, deviant behavior will be punished by the audience. The behavioral hypothesis of market category theory is about the distinction between compliance and deviation. Due to awareness of punishment, entrepreneurs often use recognized models to explain and guide their actions when creating new products. This is a process of identity recognition. Actors’ specialized production within a category and cross-category production will affect the audience’s acceptance. Paolella and Durand concluded that there are prospects for the integration of market category and institutional logic theories ^[8].

When faced with environmental complexity, resource dependence theory and institutional logic can establish a connection. For example, Pfeffer’s resource dependence theory treats the environment as a collection of organizations and focuses on the interdependence of resources between organizations and how power is generated ^[19]. Wry *et al.* concluded that institutional logic theory focuses on macro-level institutional logic and is a theory of organizational environment that can guide organizational cognition and norms, thereby affecting practice ^[20].

The differences and conflicts between two or more institutional logics and found that the disagreements may be potential entrepreneurial opportunities. Pahnke *et al.* conducted an empirical analysis using data from the medical device industry^[21]. The study found that corporate strategic investors, venture capitalists, and government investors in the United States have different institutional logics due to their different statuses and systems. Therefore, for the invested companies, the company's technical direction and business model will have completely different impacts. Individuals or organizations possess the capacity to transfer and apply extant knowledge and experiences derived from mainstream institutional logic to novel institutional contexts. This process, facilitated through hybrid reorganization, is underpinned by the theoretical constructs of institutional logic theory.

Tracey *et al.* cited the case of how the mainstream organizational form entrepreneurial incubator strived for category legitimacy, and finally optimized the category and defined competitive advantages^[22]. Reay and Hinings studied the institutional logic of a medical institution in a certain region and found that the institution shifted from professional logic to market logic^[23]. North believes that institutions are artificially designed to constrain people's behavior in the process of social interaction^[2]. As a lasting social structure, it includes three elements: cultural cognition, formativeness, and coercion. Ault posits that organizational behavior, when influenced by market logic, prioritizes the evaluation of costs and benefits associated with corporate actions, positioning profit maximization as the paramount objective of the corporation^[24]. When institutional pressure becomes an irreversible force, it will promote organizational adoption, which reflects the irrationality of the market. If enterprises face strict scrutiny of social logic, it will bring greater pressure to the realization of their market logic.

Changes in organizational fields and institutional complexity can be explained by elucidating the theory of institutional logic. Culture is the source of conflicts between different institutional logics. Individuals or organizations can also redefine and restructure culture to avoid conflicts and meet interests and goals. Institutional logic theory explores the institutional logic of society, industry, community, and other fields, and how it affects the cognition and decision-making of individuals or organizations. For example, Lounsbury and Glynn analyzed how entrepreneurs convey different cultural institutional logic by telling stories in different situations to build the company's legitimacy. In this process, it can be seen that entrepreneurs serve as the starting point for cultural logic, and experienced cultural operators have the ability to promote the essence and potential of enterprises to external audiences in different situations.

Previous research on entrepreneurial cognition was usually limited to cognitive assumptions about entrepreneurs, investors, and the psychological levels of entrepreneurs. Martens *et al.* conducted a qualitative analysis of Internet company prospectuses through large sample testing, and confirmed that mainstream institutional logic can indeed help entrepreneurs obtain external financing^[25]. When stereotypes and cognitive biases exist between entrepreneurs and their evaluators, social logic prevails on the social root of the entrepreneurs, which facilitates their interaction with investors if aligned.

Through institutional logic, the study of stereotypes of female entrepreneurs and the corresponding social and demographic logic could be further explored, which may be inconsistent with the pursuit of high-risk male entrepreneurial roles. The characteristics of male entrepreneurs are more consistent with the role of entrepreneurs. Gender logic has had an important impact on the way entrepreneurs and investors perceive themselves, with underestimation on entrepreneurial motivation and performance due to gender logic. Institutional logic and opened up new horizons for gender role coordination theory. Within the domain of entrepreneurship, two prevailing institutional logics, social impact and business sustainability, play a pivotal role. Investors exhibit a preference for female entrepreneurs who engage in philanthropic endeavors and articulate statements of social impact. This

assertion highlights the influence of institutional logics at both social and organizational levels, suggesting that these logics extend cognitive and behavioral guidance to both individuals and organizations alike.

3.2.1. Institutional logic and entrepreneurial teams

Wry *et al.* analyzed the process of consensus reached by entrepreneurial teams and pointed out that new entrepreneurial teams need to constantly tell clear stories within the team that can be collectively recognized ^[20]. This study shows that expansion of corporate members can occur in a coordinated rather than conflicting manner. Bertholdt & Olivier is one of the first scholars to propose new institutionalism logic for management ^[26]. The embeddedness of actors and the structuring and institutionalization processes of organizational fields, respectively.

The replacement of old and new institutional logics is not only the result of mutual promotion between institutional entrepreneurs, but also creates more opportunities for institutional entrepreneurs. Durand *et al.* conducted a study of the French design industry to explore why entrepreneurs who benefit most from their businesses often initiate institutional changes ^[27]. Jain and Sharma's qualitative study of the Indian telephone industry show that transformational logics are the result of different factions of institutional entrepreneurs pushing each other ^[28]. The emergence of new institutional logics does not instantaneously ascend to predominance; rather, they gradually catalyze institutional transformation. The advent of new market logics, which necessitate the identification and exploitation of opportunities, demands a temporal process and cannot be instantaneously actualized. This dynamic underscore the intricate process of institutional change, where new logics incrementally influence and reshape industry standards and practices.

The viewpoint of market logic by original elite class could be quite diverge from emerging new regulatory classes, which influenced and changed the institutional environment, and through the internal and external cooperation of reformers within the system, ultimately promoted legislation to the top and established the logic of the new market. Through research on China's photovoltaic industry that the establishment of new organizational forms provides entry conditions for latecomers, but the original experiences from precedence offered lessons and mindset for emerging peers.

Hybrid organizations embody multiple institutional logics at the same time, which could be dangerous, especially for startups. by Battilana and Dorado found that balance between the profitability and the social responsibility logic should be maintained for microfinance organizations ^[29]. External factors, such as employment policy could also be imperative for hybrid organizations. Almandoz studied the formation and dissolution of founding teams of major U.S. banks, which emphasizes the impact of founders by community logic by diverse backgrounds and cognization. This kind of hybrid organization that embodies multiple logics is easier to establish in times of economic stability, but more likely to go bankrupt and disband in times of economic instability. Almandoz further found that team size moderates the impact of institutional logic. In large teams, institutional logic could have influences on everyone in the team, even if they are more wedded to their own logic than to adhering to collective management logic ^[30]. Because in a team, responsibilities are less centralized, individual decisions are less likely to influence team decisions. Team members know each other well and are not easily influenced.

3.2.2. The impact of institutional logic theory on hybrid organizations

Institutional logic theory should provide hybrid organization researchers with strategies for complex institutions and complex contexts. If the market logic of a country is strong, the business capital of microfinance institutions

investing in that country will increase. However, if the country's religious logic is complex, it will weaken the positive impact of market logic on financing and have a negative impact on the country's business capital investment. The complex mechanism of this system through a study of socially responsible funds. The purpose of a socially responsible fund is to maximize profits, which is its financial logic. On the other hand, it also has social welfare objectives. This is a classic example of a hybrid organization.

Zhao and Lounsbury studied the relationship between religious institutional logic and market logic through the financing sources of microfinance organizations^[31]. Since microfinance organizations pursue profits on the one hand and eliminate inequality in developing countries on the other, they are also typical hybrid organizations. They find that market logic is positively related to the capital of microfinance organizations. Pache and Santos (2010) pointed out the distribution of groups representing different logics within the organization, and the requirements of different institutional logics for organizational legitimacy^[5].

In the past, it was more common to study how entrepreneurs and their firms respond to institutional pressures by one institutional factor. Institutional logic theory allows multiple logics to jointly influence the thinking and behavior of firms and business owners, which is very suitable for the national conditions of developing countries. Some of its coping strategies are decoupled, and some are not necessarily decoupled, which requires in-depth exploration. Luo *et al.* attempts to explore the reason why entrepreneurs and their companies adopt certain strategies and management and their effects^[9]. The research focuses on looking for decoupling and paradoxes in the preceding and following stages, which are often attributed to certain institutional logics or conflicts within different mechanisms. After introducing the institutional complexity emphasized by institutional logic theory, decoupling is not the only strategy to deal with institutional logics complexity. Classification of organizational coping strategies from passive resistance to active manipulation when dealing with multiple and complex legitimacy pressures in the environment. Pache and Santos further proposed that attention should be paid to the political process within the organization^[5]. For example, the distribution of groups with different logics, and specifically proposal on a series of strategies from negative to positive to deal with complex conflict logics such as acquiescence, compromise, avoidance, disobedience, and manipulation.

4. Discussion

Institutional logic theory offers a robust framework for examining the behaviors of organizational decision-makers, including entrepreneurs and business owners. Despite the substantial body of research dedicated to institutional logic theory, it remains a burgeoning area within organizational theory on the influence of institutional logic within the realm of small and medium-sized enterprises. Its vitality is attributed to the potential for interdisciplinary integration and applicability across a diverse array of domains. Future researchers need to study entrepreneurs more closely and conduct more in-depth research on the evolution of organizational coping strategies during political and cultural conflicts between different groups within a business. Study a series of response strategies and institutional conditions adopted by enterprises in response to multiple complex institutional logic environments. Especially in the field of entrepreneurship research, except for institutional entrepreneurs and hybrid organizations, there are relatively few empirical studies based on this theoretical perspective, which deserves vigorous development by researchers.

5. Conclusion

The article reviews the institutional logic theory through a literature review and discusses the necessity and key issues of applying this theory to entrepreneurship. The review also attempts to explore potential suggestions for entrepreneurs and their enterprises through the theory of institutional logic. First of all, based on the institutional logic theory, the country's core institutions include the state, market, family, company, professionals, religion, etc. There are conflicts between these aspects, but the logic of each system is highly interdependent. Secondly, institutional logic theory distinguishes itself from the foundational premises of neo-institutionalism at the level of the field. This allows researchers to integrate institutional logic into entrepreneurs' personal background, experience and other social characteristics and study how institutional logic operates.

The theory of institutional logic spans organizational fields and personal cognitive categories, and is specifically implemented into the social experience of entrepreneurs. Policy logic refers to the combination of a series of policies and tools adopted by the government to promote the upgrading of small and medium-sized enterprise entrepreneurship to specialization and innovation, including service supply and industrial policy guidance. For example, in real scenarios, diversified entities such as government-led scientific research institutes, financial institutions, and industry leaders provide enterprises with industrial foundations and investment and financing supply and demand connections. In addition, there are also social public services such as the establishment of industry-university-research cooperation platforms to help companies obtain operational and knowledge resources and ensure that companies understand industry market trends in a timely manner. On the one hand, government special innovation funds can directly reduce corporate R&D costs and risks. On the other hand, invested enterprises can also attract investment from investment institutions and other social capital by releasing signals of growth advantages. Government investment in innovation can reduce the negative externalities that may be brought about by corporate innovation. At the same time, by influencing the input of factor resources, we constantly update technology, spawn new products, and drive the upstream and downstream of the industrial chain by optimizing the industrial structure. Furthermore, the level of a country or region's digital economy may significantly impact a business's ability to access and manipulate data, causing organizations to view decoupling as more than just a strategy to deal with external legitimacy pressures.

Overall, institutional logic in the field of entrepreneurship could be complex, with potentially multiple logics entangling and interacting with each other. The consequences of institutional logics within the organization may also be impacted by the logics governing the overall society, such as the cultural, demographic and region logics. Furthermore, the logics governing the entrepreneurs themselves and their team members could also be significant. Institutional logics in certain industry, such as finance and education, has more current studies with more studies needed in other fields. Additionally, more focal studies on institutional logics of small and middle enterprises and the impact of social logics with vertical and horizontal comparisons may be needed for deeper understanding the evaluation of entrepreneurship institutional logic in depth.

Disclosure statement

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