



Research article

Explanatory factors of female entrepreneurship and limiting elements



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ABSTRACT

Researches on entrepreneurship from a gender perspective reveal significant differences not only between the levels of participation of men and women in business, but also between the orientations, motives and business opportunities for both. Based on this fact, the following investigation is performed, whose objective is twofold: firstly, to know what are the aspects that influence the entrepreneurship of women and secondly, to identify what factors determine and/or difficult the creation and development of business that they undertake. To achieve both, it is reviewed, first, the literature on this subject and, second, are exposed the main results of the qualitative analysis with Atlas.ti from interviews with a group of Spanish entrepreneurs.

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Factores explicativos del emprendimiento femenino y elementos limitadores

RESUMEN

Las investigaciones sobre emprendimiento femenino desde la perspectiva del género revelan diferencias significativas, no solo entre los niveles de participación de hombres y mujeres en la actividad empresarial, sino también entre las orientaciones, motivaciones y oportunidades empresariales de ambos. En función de este hecho se plantea el siguiente trabajo de investigación, cuyo objetivo es doble: por una parte, conocer cuáles son los aspectos que influyen en la iniciativa empresarial de la mujer y, por otra, identificar qué factores condicionan y dificultan la creación y el desarrollo de los negocios que estas emprenden. Para la consecución de ambos se revisa, primero, la literatura especializada sobre esta temática y, a continuación, se exponen los resultados más destacados del análisis cualitativo realizado

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con el programa informático Atlas.ti a partir de entrevistas a un grupo de emprendedores españoles.

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Literature review

If we focus on the first of the aspects that concern us, why a woman resolved to undertake and what is involved in its decision, studies show the confluence of factors of diverse nature.

First, it speaks of individual or personal factors associated with the woman herself. In this group, psychological and cognitive aspects, concretely motivation (desire for progress and autonomy, need for achievement and fulfillment, etc.) and individual subjective perception (risk tolerance, self-confidence, recognition of business opportunity, etc.). Numerous investigations agree that these aspects play a key role in the decision to undertake (Cromie, 1987; Minniti & Nardone, 2007). The socioeconomic characteristics of women (age, education, income, professional experience, etc.) are also considered by some studies as individual factors influencing female entrepreneurship, while in the literature appears less frequently than the psychological.

Along with these factors, the theoretical review allows to identify as enhancing female entrepreneurship, social and institutional factors. They associated with the environment that surrounds women. Researches put the spotlight especially in the family. They understand that it is an element that can influence doubly in the willingness to undertake: first, as an actor that provides economic resources to women so that it is started in the business world and secondly, as an agent of socialization that can stimulate their entrepreneurial spirit, making to continue with the existing family business or dares to create their own. Studies such as Aldrich and Cliff (2003) and Kirkwood (2007) come to confirm the importance that the family has in this regard. The capital stock is one of the social elements that, according to the literature, supports female entrepreneurship. Ventura analysis and Quero (2013) reveals, for example, that the existence of links with support agencies to the business activity and with organizations or business networks influences the levels of self-confidence of women and, therefore, their intention to undertake. As institutional factors, Álvarez, Noguera, and Urbano (2012) identified a number of “formal elements” as non-economic policy support, funding and specific formal training. Their study, however, reveals that “informal ways” as the perception of skills, social networks and family role, are more determinants in women’s entrepreneurship.

Since the beginning of the crisis in the early twenty-first century, research has highlighted the importance of the current economic climate has on women entrepreneurship. Based on this, can be identified, in third place, the economic and employment factors, as explanatory from the female entrepreneurship. They are related to the limited employment opportunities, high rates of unemployment, instability and

insecurity that characterize the labor market and employment discrimination against women. The study of Ruiz, Camelo, and Coduras (2012a), data from the Observatory Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM), has found that rates of entrepreneurship “by necessity” have increased in recent years in Spain, being this increased especially significant among women as a way to ensure personal income.

Regarding the second aspect that interests us, identify the factors that affect and hinder female entrepreneurship, the literature review and the results of interviews conducted in the field work, allow to identify, mainly, four barriers that hinder such entrepreneurship in the female population, of which two have a strong interest; specifically, those related to the socio-cultural status of women and the related access to corporate networks, whether information or business (Bruni, Gherardi, & Poggio, 2004; Rodríguez & Santos, 2008). This is evidenced by the fact that at the beginning of entrepreneurship, one of the key determinants is the education and training of women as entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship (Pineda, 2014); just as in the course of the entrepreneurship, is the process of social re-education and self-recognition of itself, fed by other people that are relevant, what sustains business management and entrepreneurial spirit. There is no doubt that when the company is running, is when the woman perceived positive traits in socialization (Rodríguez-Díaz, Jiménez, & Rebollo-Catalán, 2014), and where the social networks play a crucial role, especially in the early stages of the creation of a company. Research conducted by Ruiz, Camelo, and Coduras (2012b) concludes that, in women, there is less apparent possession of a professional social network or knowledge of other entrepreneurs.

A third constraint regulating the entrepreneurial activity of women is their family responsibilities. Family and business conciliation is a recurrent theme in research that analyzes the relation between women entrepreneurs and family (Aldrich & Cliff, 2003; Bruni et al., 2004; Brush, De Bruin, & Welter, 2009). A review of the literature, in this regard, leads to awareness of the complexity presented by this relationship, which invites to study it considering two perspectives, the Latin American countries and the countries closest to Spain, which is what concerns our interest. The research conducted by Álvarez et al. (2012) on family role, supported by the database of the project GEM Spain, for 2010, points out that engage in housework decreases the probability of being an entrepreneur, especially for women. The data provided by the study indicate that women who have family responsibilities, reduced by 33.1% probability to undertake, while in the case of men, that decrease is only 2.4%. Consistent with these results, authors like Baughn, Chua, and Neupert (2006) and Langowitz and Minniti (2007) also show how family responsibilities face discrimination, acting as potentially limiting agents.

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