



Research article

Cultural factors and gender role in female entrepreneurship[☆]



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ABSTRACT

Women play an important role in entrepreneurship although feminine entrepreneurship is lower than masculine entrepreneurship. However, the distance between both entrepreneurship rates (male–female) varies across countries because of the influence of different roles and stereotypes on entrepreneurial behavior. In order to understand those differences, this paper analyzes the distance between male and female entrepreneurship from a cultural perspective in 55 countries. Findings show that there is no clear relation between country masculinity and gender entrepreneurship breach.

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Aspectos culturales y rol de género en iniciativas empresariales femeninas

RESUMEN

Las empresas creadas por mujeres representan una parte sustancial del emprendimiento, a pesar de que los hombres superan a las mujeres en la tasa de creación de empresas. A pesar de ello, un análisis de las cifras a nivel mundial muestra que la distancia entre tasas de emprendimiento según el género varía en función del país analizado. Esto es así debido a que los roles y estereotipos influyentes condicionan una conducta más o menos emprendedora. Para analizar estas diferencias en este trabajo se estudia la distancia existente entre el emprendimiento de hombres y mujeres desde una perspectiva cultural utilizando una

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muestra de 55 países. Los resultados observados no permiten establecer una relación entre el nivel de masculinidad del país y la brecha de género en emprendimiento, tal como habíamos propuesto.

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Introduction

Since entrepreneurship is considered as a source of economic development, innovation and growth, the study of factors that influence rates of creating new companies has become an important issue on the agendas of economists, researchers and politicians in most countries. Understanding the role played by the social, cultural and economic factors in entrepreneurship is key to comprehend how to encourage culture and entrepreneurial behavior.

There is a widespread appearance of policies and actions supporting business creation by women due to the lower proportion of women related to men who decide to start a business is lower (Minniti, 2010; Singer, Amoros, & Moska, 2015).

A first explanation for this stems from Sociology. From this perspective, it is stated that women are less entrepreneurial than men due to stereotypes and roles that are attributed according to their gender and move away from attitudes of domain or achievement, placing them in roles near housework, childcare and their elders (Eagly, 1987). Also, within this perspective other researches say how men are positioned in society today, through certain patterns, ideologies and speeches reinforce its dominant position in the labor market and relegates women to the background (Connell, 1990).

Secondly and closely related to the above, understanding the national culture is essential to analyze how each country values and rewards the behaviors that promote entrepreneurial behavior. In this sense, in those countries where social roles are closer to competitiveness, ambition and achievement, that is to say, where highlight the roles attributed to the male group would be expected lower rates of female entrepreneurship (McGrath, Macmillan, & Scheinberg, 1992; Shane, 1992, 1993).

From these perspectives, this research seeks to deepen a basic question in entrepreneurship research, why more men than women become entrepreneur? Likewise, an international vision of entrepreneurial activity rates masculine and feminine will be offered, analyzing them from a cultural perspective.

To achieve the objectives, the work is structured as follows. First, the sociological perspective is analyzed through gender roles and hegemonic theory. Secondly, based on the theory developed by Hofstede (1980), the influence of culture is discussed in the entrepreneurial orientation of individuals in a country. This revision proposes the existence of the relationship under study. Next, this relationship is studied with a sample of 55 countries. The paper ends with a discussion of the results and analysis of the implications of the results.

Theoretical framework and research hypotheses

Gender roles and entrepreneurship

The existing literature on gender and entrepreneurship is quite extensive, finding a broad consensus on the fact that men are those who start businesses to a greater extent (Eagly, 1987; Langowitz & Minniti, 2007; Mckay, Phillimore, & Teasdale, 2010; Themudo, 2009).

This greater propensity of the male group is explained by different theories. Currently, the most accepted theory is the social role developed by Eagly (1987). This theory states that people, to be socially acceptable, must develop certain stereotypes. Some of these stereotypes are attributed according to their gender. Thus, gender stereotypes refer to preconceived ideas and to previous judgments that have a significant emotional charge and reflect the views of society on both men and women, so that the male group is more likely to have higher domain or achievement attitudes, while women are closer to care behaviors and docility.

The theory of social role has its applicability in explaining the observed differences in gender behavior and is based on the theory of gender role (Eagly, 1987). In itself, this theory is based on patterns of each gender, appealing to social customs that define appropriate behavior for women and men (Eagly, 1987; Eagly & Carli, 2003; López-Zafra, García-Retamero, & Eagly, 2009). Specifically, social customs put women in the home, doing housework and caring for children and elderly, while men are responsible to work and bring home money to support the family. Therefore, the male group is configured as the ideal to start and run businesses (Bird & Brush, 2002), while women find barriers in exploiting business opportunities (Carter & Rosa, 1998).

Other authors, like Connell (1990) developed the theory of gender role, arguing that the gender-related stereotypes of the individual derive what he calls 'hegemonic masculinity'. Hegemonic masculinity is how men are positioned in society today, through certain patterns, actions, ideologies and discourses that allow them to gain and maintain an advantage over women (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

The argument of hegemonic masculinity reaffirms the division that occurs in the labor market, watching men as ideal workers and qualifying women as secondary labor versus male (Acker, 1990; Eagly & Carli, 2003; Furst & Reeves, 2008; Godwin, Stevens, & Brenner, 2006; López-Zafra et al., 2009). Therefore, in the business field a hierarchical order is established, where men are seen as the standard and women as the exception to the rule (Eddleston & Powell, 2012; Godwin et al., 2006; Gupta, Turban, Wasti, & Sikdar, 2009).

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