



# Female indigenous entrepreneurs, culture, and social capital. The case of the Quechua community of Tiquipaya (Bolivia)

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## ABSTRACT

Female indigenous entrepreneurs (FEs) in Latin America are facing several economic problems and social challenges when developing their activities. General society, community values, and individual traits have been signalled as the main factors affecting their development. In this paper, we explore the enablers and inhibitors of FEs of the *Quechua* community of Tiquipaya (Bolivia) and the role of social capital. As contributions, firstly, we found relevant enablers and inhibitors for the development of FEs at three levels, namely, society, community and individual. Secondly, we identified differences in the perceptions of those factors by FEs, non-indigenous intermediary organisations, and indigenous intermediary organisations. Thirdly, we discovered that the *Quechua* culture values of collaboration (*Ayni*) are not being applied by FEs in their business related social contacts, being the individualism more common. Therefore, FEs may be losing opportunities of development and progress and, as an additional problem, this is not considered by the support organisations. Relevant implications for policy and practice are included.

## 1. Introduction

The study of indigenous entrepreneurship considers the creation, management, and development of new ventures by indigenous people (Hindle & Lansdowne, 2005). It includes any type of entrepreneurial activity, self-employment based on indigenous knowledge by indigenous people whose ancestors were living in an area prior to colonization or prior to the formation of a nation state (Dana, 2007a). This area of research has received considerable interest in the entrepreneurship literature in recent years (e.g., Collins, Morrison, Basu, & Krivokapic-Skoko, 2017; Fuller & Cummings, 2003; Henry, Dana, & Murphy, 2018; Hindle & Moroz, 2010; Lindvert, Patel, & Wincet, 2017; Peredo & Anderson, 2006), and also in related areas, such as female immigrant entrepreneurs (e.g., Chreim, Spence, Crick, & Liao, 2018; Villares-Varela, 2017; Villares-Varela & Essers, 2017). However, there is still a need to solve some potential problems, such as to consider that the indigenous community would like to engage in entrepreneurship and the failure to adapt the approach to entrepreneurship to the distinctive indigenous community (Peredo & Mclean, 2013). Also, to tend to overlook the intersection of ethnicity, gender and other central axes of difference (class, religion, disability) (Ram, Jones, & Villares-Varela, 2017).

Besides this, self-employment plays a critical role in enabling women to participate in economic activity, particularly for women in rural areas (Witbooi & Ukpere, 2011), as a way to organise their own life. However, women face more difficulties than men and have different motivations to become entrepreneurs (Seongbae & Brooke, 2013). Among the mentioned difficulties that prevent women to assume personal responsibility, are access to finance, informal networks, and training (Koutsou, Notta, Samathrakakis, & Partalidou, 2009; Little, 1991).

In addition, most of the papers have studied gender and entrepreneurship at the individual level, being scarce the studies that take into account the influence level of the community, in particular an indigenous community, and these studies are imperative to create a knowledge base of women's experiences of being financially excluded (Witbooi & Ukpere, 2011). Furthermore, a call for more empirical research with a multilevel design, taking into account the relationship between individuals and the environment has been made (De Bruin, Brush, & Welter, 2007).

Consequently, the general aim of this paper is to gain insight about the main factors affecting the development of indigenous female entrepreneurs (FEs) adopting a multilevel design. In particular, we study FEs in the context of the *Quechua* community of Tiquipaya (Bolivia), a

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rural area where entrepreneurship, especially among women, might be crucial for the economic and social sustainability of the indigenous community. Considering these factors, our Research Questions (RQs) are:

- RQ1: What are the main factors affecting female entrepreneurship development in Quechua communities?
- RQ2: Are there differences in the involved agents' perceptions of the enablers/inhibitors of this development?
- RQ3: How are Quechua cultural values reflected in female entrepreneurship in these communities?

With this paper, we contribute to the indigenous entrepreneurship and to the gender and entrepreneurship research streams in three distinct ways. Firstly, we found relevant enablers and inhibitors for the development of indigenous female entrepreneurship at three levels, namely, society, community and individual. Secondly, we identified differences in the perceptions of those factors by FEs, non-indigenous intermediary organisations (NISOs), and indigenous intermediary organisations (ISOs). Thirdly, we discovered that the *Quechua* culture values of collaboration (*Ayni*) are not applied by FEs in their business related social contacts, being the individualism more common. Therefore, FEs may be losing opportunities of development and progress and, as an additional problem, this is not considered by the support organisations.

The paper continues as follows. After describing the research context, a literature review on FEs is summarised, and an integrated research framework is proposed. Next, the methods and main findings are summarised. The discussion and conclusions close the paper.

## 2. Research context

Tiquipaya (Bolivia) was selected as area of study for being an exemplar of an indigenous community with an interesting mix of population (indigenous community and other), cultures and agriculture, and commercial activities (INE, 2012, 2015). It is a municipality located in the province of Quillacollo (Bolivia), with an average height of 2640 m above sea level. It has a total area of 341 km<sup>2</sup> and an urban area of 1299 ha (PDM, 2000). The population is closed to 54,000 inhabitants, of whom 4431 live in rural areas (INE, 2012). This rural population has decreased dramatically between 2001 and 2012 (59.2% according to the Census 2012). Nearly half of the people speak *Quechua* and Spanish (INE, 2015), 51.41% of the population is female (INE, 2012), and the population in poverty is 41.2% (higher than the average in the metropolitan region) (MPED, 2012). Illiterate population is 90.5%, being the average years of study of 7.97 and the infant mortality 57.48 per thousand on average.

The municipality of Tiquipaya is divided in two areas. The valley area is where the urban settlement is located, is small but has a higher population density, predominantly occupied in manufacturing, services, and trade, but also in agricultural production. The mountains area is where the rural population live and it constitutes the specific area of this study (the Tunari mountain range). This mountains area occupies 98% of the territory, having the agricultural production as the most important activity, with the potato production as predominant, as well as secondary crops, such as *oca*, *papalisa*, *ulluco*, beans, and small experimental crops of vegetables (onions, cabbage, and lettuce), peas, or wheat. Other activities include livestock farming, dominated by *llama* and *sheep* (SERINCO, 1999). Self-consumption is most widespread and the little surplus is used for the barter or sale of products at weekly fairs. Population, over 4000 inhabitants, is exclusively rural (CEDESCO, 2006) and the age distribution shows a broad base in early ages (ages 0–9 represent 33% of the total), while in the adult ages the population is reduced and elderly people aged over 80 years are scarce (CEDESCO, 2006). Finally, the average home consists of 3–4 people (3.61 people per family), although many families have several children (CEDESCO,

2006).

To sum up, Tiquipaya is a rural area where entrepreneurship, especially among women, might be crucial for the economic and social sustainability of the indigenous community.

### 2.1. Quechua culture

The self-identification with the *Quechua* culture in Bolivia is 62.93% (ECLAC, 2001). Their religiosity is closely connected with agriculture, as it is through agricultural rituals that they receive favours from the *Pachamama* or *Madre Tierra* (Mother Earth) (Mariscotti, 1978). Regarding the *Quechua* values and traditions, an important contribution to the *Quechua* culture is life in the *Ayllu*, which is the unit that forms the fabric of social organisation and political communities. This model of organisation, in which kinship is essential, recognizes collective and inalienable land ownership, though it is parcelled (Choque & Mamani, 2001). The *Ayllu* is based on ethical and moral principles that the new Bolivian Constitution translates as *Suma Qamaña* or *good living* (Huanacuni, 2010), which, in general terms, means to live in harmony and balance, to live in community, brotherhood, and notably with complementarity. It is a communal, harmonious, and self-sufficient life. Living well means complementing each other, sharing without competing, and living in harmony between people and nature (Mamani, 2010). Thus, development arises not only from the economic perspective, but also from the social and environmental perspective, in which people practise reciprocity and respect the world that surrounds them (Huanacuni, 2010).

Importantly, the current presence of cultural elements of purely ancient tradition is reducing, due, in part, to the ways of life being interspersed among Western urban and traditional aspects (Bustamante, 2005), what can lead to the loss of development opportunities.

## 3. Literature review

Anderson, Dana, and Dana (2006) stated that there is a desire among many indigenous people to rebuild their communities on a traditional and culturally grounded foundation. This means that gradually entrepreneurship is becoming more important for indigenous people as it enables them to integrate their culture with their economic endeavours (Ratten & Dana, 2017).

Indigenous entrepreneurship differs from other forms of entrepreneurship in terms of the context of the enterprise, the types of goals and outcomes on which the enterprise is focused, and/or the form and organisation of the enterprise (Cahn, 2008) and is sufficiently distinguished from other fields of research (Hindle & Moroz, 2010). Furthermore, female entrepreneurship has been defined as different from male entrepreneurship (De Bruin et al., 2007; Helene, 2006). In this vein, stereotypes affect the intention to be an entrepreneur and women have a lower propensity (Gupta, Turban, Wasti, & Sikdar, 2009) and some differences have been identified in how men and women conciliate the company and the family (Eddleston & Powell, 2012). In addition, gender determines how the inhibitors are perceived (Shinnar, Giacomini, & Janssen, 2012) and 'fear of failure' and 'perceived capabilities' are mentioned as the most important socio-cultural factors in the probability of becoming a FE (Noguera, Alvarez, & Urbano, 2013).

More specifically, regarding the factors (enablers and inhibitors) that affect FEs, Koutsou et al. (2009) identified three types of factors in rural areas: *external* (the lack of jobs, the availability of business opportunities, and subsidy programmes), *personal* (age, work on the family farm, family obligations, lack of capital and time, and lack of experience), and *psychological* (indecision and caution). In some cases, these factors lead women to the only available choice (Koutsou et al., 2009) that could be to start a venture. In addition, it has been established how FEs tend to nurture satisfaction with the work–family balance by creating work–family synergies, whereas male entrepreneurs

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