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## Research article

# Elements that contribute to boost female entrepreneurship: A prospective analysis



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## ABSTRACT

This paper aims to identify what environmental modulators elements favor and contribute to enhance female entrepreneurship from a gender perspective. The qualitative study draws on 10 interviews in depth after being tested on their contents, from a relational perspective, allow a set of conclusions and recommendations that contribute to the empowerment of women entrepreneurs figure. The results highlight the importance of social support and comprehensive training in creating a culture that promotes and makes visible the role of women entrepreneurs.

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## Elementos que contribuyen a potenciar la capacidad empresarial femenina: un análisis prospectivo

## RESUMEN

Este trabajo tiene como propósito identificar qué elementos moduladores del entorno favorecerían y contribuirían a potenciar la capacidad empresarial femenina desde una perspectiva de género. El estudio cualitativo toma como referencia 10 entrevistas en profundidad que, tras ser analizadas en sus contenidos, desde una perspectiva relacional, permitirán establecer un conjunto de conclusiones y recomendaciones que contribuyan a un empoderamiento de la figura de la mujer emprendedora. Los resultados destacan la importancia del apoyo social y la formación integral en la creación de una cultura que promueva y visibilice el papel de la mujer emprendedora.

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### Palabras clave:

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## Introduction

The complexity of the entrepreneur has led to investigations, from various perspectives, tried to investigate the moderating factors of the action that results in the formation of a company. The current success of the discourse on entrepreneurship in economic fields is determined by the confidence placed in entrepreneurial activity as a generator of innovation, creativity, growth and employment.

The conditions in which “creativity” occur, which accompanies the entrepreneurial spirit, however, must be contextualized in the cycle and economic structure of the stage in which they occur. Therefore, while it is appropriate to observe the characteristics of the subjects of entrepreneurship, not least important is to consider the environmental conditions, conditions in which they exercise their influence not only tangible elements and objectives, such as economic resources or training to undertake, but also other intangibles elements as the social status of this activity or roles associated with the entrepreneur. Gender belongs to this last type of factors.

If we limit ourselves to the geographical area covered by this study, Spain, it appears that gender differences have a translation in the lower propensity for entrepreneurship in the case of women, confirming a trend that indicates that the rate of male entrepreneurship has been traditionally higher than women (Guemes, Coduras, Rachida, & Pampillon, 2011). According to the *Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM)* for Spain, in the period between 2003 and 2011 men led 63.0% of entrepreneurial initiatives and women did in the remaining 36.9%. This translates into a rate of entrepreneurial activity (TEA) in this period of 4.4% in women and 7.7% in men. The situation of economic crisis that the country has experienced in this period has resulted, on the one hand, which has not diminished the distance between the two rates and, on the other – not least –, that entrepreneurial initiatives do not have successfully accomplished consolidation. According to the same source, which itself has been equated was the percentage of business closures in both sexes (1.8% vs. 1.7%), due to a growth of 260% in the last nine years, separations of business carried out by women. Lack of profitability, funding problems and other reasons of a personal nature are among the reasons given by the entrepreneurs for such a high rate of growth in business closures.

These data and research on the subject suggests that female entrepreneurship is conditioned by various aspects that should be establish categorizing “formal” (that is to say, objectives and infrastructure) and “informal” (subjective character, linked to the entrepreneurial personality or socio-cultural factors, including gender). In the first line there are numerous studies that identify institutional aspects, such as access to funding or the existence or not of social collaboration networks as adjuvants elements in entrepreneurship (Carter, Shaw, Lam, & Wilson, 2007; Gatewood, Brush, Carter, Greene, & Hart, 2009).

In the second, the research focuses on the influence of socio-cultural factors (Álvarez & Urbano, 2011) or other informal aspects (perception of competencies and skills) that are relevant as differential components of entrepreneurship by

gender (Álvarez, Noguera, & Urbano, 2012), and are reflected in the greater or lesser impulse of entrepreneurship of women.

Therefore, it is appropriate to continue investigating on the moderating factors of female entrepreneurship and the necessary actions for their empowerment.

## Analytical perspectives in research on the conditionings of entrepreneurship

Making a brief summary of research on the factors that influence – whether positively or negatively – the entrepreneurial action, you can set three analytical perspectives. The first is economic and has its origin in the Schumpeterian theory of innovation and entrepreneurship. From *Schumpeter's thesis (1957)* research has been based on models that combine general economic conditions and the functioning of markets as determinant variables of entrepreneurial action. As a current exponent of this line, the theory of institutional economics (North, 1990) indicates that human behavior is conditioned by the institutional environment, that can encourage or limit the decisions of individuals and specifically the decision to create or not a company (Álvarez et al., 2012: 44).

Secondly, there is the psychological perspective, which has focused on studying the importance of the individual factors in determining entrepreneurship. These studies are a precursor to *McClelland (1961)*. The author defines the psychological profile of the entrepreneur from the accompanying attributes: originality and innovation; moderate risk aversion; acceptance of responsibility; knowledge of the results of their actions and planning based on the long term. In the same line, other more recent studies have explored the psychological profile of the entrepreneur (Boydston, Hopper, & Wright, 2000) emphasizing variables such as attitude, motivation, behavior or skills as differentiating factors of such profile (Capelleras & Kantis, 2009), up to define the existence of a true “human capital” – in union with the “social capital” –, would collect the special conditions of the entrepreneur (Federico, Kantis, & Rabetino, 2009). However, there are no conclusive studies in charting the personality of the entrepreneur.

While these perspectives addressed key issues in determining the moderating factors of entrepreneurship, it can be inferred that entrepreneurial activity could be given at any time, given certain conditions of the personality of individuals, regardless of conditions of social character (Pereira, 2007: 19). As shown in sociological perspective, this premise is far from reality.

Since the eighties some studies collect the determination exercised by the contextual factors in the development of entrepreneurial activity; factors such as working conditions, the need for improvement in the workplace and gaining social recognition (Evans & Lighton, 1989; Shapero & Sokol, 1982). Also, from a contextual analysis, other studies influence which could join the “social capital” of the entrepreneur, defined as both the availability of resources, whether economic and personal, as is the existence of social networks, both for its intensity, for the opportunity of their relationships, they can have an influence on the propensity to innovate and undertake entrepreneurial initiatives (Ajzen, 1988; Burt, 2000). In this line, studies like the one of *Giraudeau (2007)* relativize the

determination of the employer (in the Schumpeterian sense of the word as an individual, visionary and intuitive actor), to emphasize the fact entrepreneur as a combination of factors operating in the long term, given the difficulties in mobilizing resources to realize a business initiative.

The gender perspective falls into this category of studies in which sociodemographic characteristics such as gender or age are seen as key variables of entrepreneurship, considering that condition the way in which the individual are introduced into economic activity and relations established from such conditions.

While gender appears as a common variable in the study of entrepreneurship, gender perspective has not been extensively explored in the research on the subject. In recent years this perspective begins to have relevance given the gradual increase of women's entrepreneurship, however, is necessary to specify that this activity is not growing at the same pace as the entry of women into the labor market.

The complexity of the entrepreneur made and the emergence of a culture of this nature have led to integrative approaches to all previous perspectives. In that direction goes the works analyzing the issue as a process in which individual characteristics influence the entrepreneur and the environment in which it operates, such as institutional and social support (Ortiz & Millán, 2011).

This last point serves as theoretical framework for the analysis made in this article whose purpose is to investigate the contextual factors that exert as engines of entrepreneurship, as well as deficiencies or items which by their absence (or lack of support in the right direction), have been able to assume a brake on women entrepreneurship. Only from this diagnosis will be able to carry out a prospective approach to actions that promote entrepreneurship.

## Methodological aspects of the analysis

To implement these objectives we have worked with the qualitative analysis from Atlas.ti program described in the methodology of the study. Specifically, we have analyzed the issues contained in questions 7 and 9 of the script interview.

In order to clarify the meaning of terms used in the speech, the codes used in the processing of these issues are defined next.

Regarding the question: What elements (scenarios, variables, aspects) would help boost female entrepreneurship? (Question 7 of the interview guide), has categorized based on the following codes:

- "Reconciliation policies or linked to it." Alludes to the difficulties of reconciling work and family life, and demand oriented policies to shared responsibility in the performance of tasks and the need to incorporate these guidelines in education and, in general, social.
- "Oriented actions for creating a business culture, specific training and give visibility to female entrepreneurship". Identifies the need for specific training and all actions that help create and promote a culture of entrepreneurship among women.

- "Making changes in the schedule of working hours". Expresses the need to restructure the workday, a matter not necessarily linked to reconciliation and to the rationalization of working time.
- "Associationism" has been used when the speech referred to the virtues of the associationism for the development of entrepreneurship.
- "Involvement of the Administration", identifies the need for state or European aid for development of female entrepreneurship.
- "Crisis scenario", contains references to the economic crisis as a possible opportunity for female entrepreneurship.

With regard to the research question: Suppose that part of "zero" again in their business activities, what kind of training support would you like to receive/considered important to pose undertaking? And familiar? What about the environment? (Question 9 of the interview script) is coded according to the following categories:

- "Training support would have liked to get to undertake." It refers to the allusions of respondents of both sexes to their desire to receive more training – formal or not – of any kind.
- "Family support that would have liked to get to undertake" identifies the family support that would have liked to receive or considered necessary to undertake.
- "State support that would have liked to get to undertake," alludes to the desirable support for women or, in general, to undertake, by the public administration.
- "Support from groups or associations that would have liked to get to undertake" includes fragments of the speech referred to the support necessary or desirable to encourage entrepreneurship by movements or associations.

## Descriptive and relational dimensions in the discourse about the facilitating elements of entrepreneurship of women

The descriptive level is a first level of discourse analysis. From this, it is often identify certain codes listed in the interventions of the interviewed subjects, as well as the possible relation between codes (co-occurrence).

Relational analysis, meanwhile, enables identify the linkages between codes (families) to extract causal relations between the elements of speech.

According to these budgets, then factors are analyzed that "will help to boost female entrepreneurship" from the perspective of the subjects.

From a purely quantitative descriptive view, the analysis results allows to dimension the reiteration in the discourse of proposals on actions that help women entrepreneurship as established codes (Table 1). They highlight the importance attached by entrepreneurs (men and women) to "actions aimed at creating a corporate culture, training and visibility to female entrepreneurship" (appears in quotations in men speech 11 times and 8 in women). Secondly, there are the issues related to "Reconciliation" (in the same order of importance for both genders). Then, with a notable difference, the "assistance provided by the Administration" is mentioned,

**Table 1 – The frequency of use of codes in the discourse about “what elements help to boost female entrepreneurship” according to gender.**

Code	Male speech	Female speech
Oriented actions to develop business culture, specific training and give visibility to female entrepreneurship	11	8
Conciliation	6	6
Administration involvement. State or European aid	6	1
Associationism	1	1
Crisis scenario as an enhancer of female entrepreneurship	1	0
Making changes in the schedule of working hours	0	1

Source: Authors.

although in this case, although it appears repeatedly in the speech of men (6 times), it is not in women, where is absent this allusion. Meanwhile, the “Associationism” as a coadjutant of entrepreneurship is mentioned in rare cases (1 each of the blocks of speech according to gender), which indicates the less importance is granted, as in the case of “entrepreneurship crisis enhancer “or” changes in working hours” to assist female entrepreneurship.

At this point arises the question of whether there are differences in the gender discourse on how to operate the above factors, beyond existing inequalities from a purely quantitative perspective.

As for the issue with the highest number of responses: “support involving actions aimed at creating a business culture that encourages and makes visible female entrepreneurship” are unanimous in the valuation of issues such as education/formation in creating spirit entrepreneur, regardless of gender. So it is evident in the following excerpts:

If you in education, which knows no gender, are encouraging the figure of undertaking, are encouraging that men and women have since childhood the action to undertake and through communication create a favorable environment for the society values what it means to be an entrepreneur (E10-Man).

Education in terms of promoting, secondly knowledge that people knows. [...] Because of course, I think the biggest problem we have in Spain in the subject of entrepreneurs is a further problem that it is not well done is a communication problem. If you don't say to the people what is to undertake the people don't understand (E9-Man).

The woman also emphasizes the recognition of the work of the entrepreneur as a cornerstone for the expansion of economic activity, which did not appear in the speech of men:

Now it is giving recognition to women's business projects [...] That is how the “powder” do not run as fast as the “powder” but those who are finishing their studies and see that women are accessing, then is an incentive to want to undertake (E2-Women).

Now there is a differential nuance in the discourse of women compared to men when referred to the education of the entrepreneurial spirit, and is the first appeal to the education with a full sense of character “humanist” beyond actions of training, while men's speech is emphasized in training activities and communication with a specific meaning, linked to the function of the entrepreneur.

Not only for women, for women and men would be the same, training. But not the technical formation just the human. So, basically it would lose the fear, which is a matter of personal work, and social education and is not learned in school, when should be learn in school. Basically it is training (E3-Women).

The entrepreneurs also emphasized in training aspects related to the development of resources such as leadership, an issue that is possibly pointing to what is socially “tagged” as a lack or weakness associated with the subordinate role of women in the productive sector.

Training and leadership [...] I think from the schools can do many things, from the universities also [...] More debates in class, that the criticism is strengthened within its communication and leadership. But I think that both men and women, perhaps men need less but the woman is missing a lot because we see that socially, we see it at home and in our environment and when we are young it's a thing that keeps getting in and you don't change it at school or at university because will go on. That is fundamental (E1-Women).

In the aspects linked to reconciliation policies can be identified gender differences in perception. While entrepreneurs are demanding co-responsibility as an obligation, the men experience it and claimed as a “right” to “enjoy” the family or leisure time:

When you are the head of company you are very busy, when you're not you rely on a schedule that you have set. ... that in Spain we have to change and we have to give everyone the opportunity to do both because I think the key is balance, unless you want to do one thing or the other, which to me is completely legitimate [...] the reconciliation of working life, but I think it's also a guy thing, and family [...] it is that men also have the right to be with family (E9-Man).

I think we have been talking about reconciliation 30 years for women. I think now we must teach men to reconcile. While in the house there is no equality at all, the woman will always be below the man, that is why I say that have to think about that has to reconcile one with the other, because at work logically the wage gap that there is. ... a man posed no problems to the boss (E2-Women).

[...] And a greater obligation of man in the family aspect that facilitate us women occupy positions of greater responsibility [...] I think every time we have to have it clearer and if we are many hours a day working we will seize good and we will organize ourselves well to fulfill expectations, and that everyone can make a living. The issue of men is different, they organize their life plan as is happening, is not it? Now we have the meeting, we'll see when we go out. ... Are not organized like us. I think



that organizing, everything can be done and can fulfill your family life and everything (E5-Women).

Differences in the discourse on the function of state aid are also observed. In general, in the speech of men appears as a measure of acceptable positive discrimination, however, for women, is not only virtually absent as support in the speech, but when referred to the financial support in general (not necessarily from state), its effectiveness is not perceived:

There repayable grants than for men are 6000 euros and for women 9000. There are ICO<sup>1</sup> credits that are the same for both. And a little more. Not that there's much more support for women than for men. Also I have to say that all entrepreneurs with whom I have related, including myself, we have undertaken without help, mostly. Why? Because we have not arrived in time to deadline, because we don't have the requirements demanded, because they have finished those helps. . . In short I see this helps. . . those that are not to form the entrepreneur or to form in how to create your company, other than that, all others I see are ineffective (E1-Women).

For as explicitly for women, perhaps always you can do more because, as I said before, it is a sector to develop and each time is increasing but this will be growing and is good to potentiate from management the role of the enterprising women and also dares to encourage more women to it. I think it's improvable, I think it can be more develop by the administration on enhancing that field (E8-Man).

They have to create organizations that I believe will exist, state funds, European funds have to help, motivate and encourage. Perhaps the problems of women requires that and it is valued I would agree to give but to reliable projects, not to any project (E6-Man).

Other potentially drive elements, such as associationism, they do not have much presence in the entrepreneurial discourse, which come in connection with a certain spirit of individualism associated with the company; however, when it appears, it attaches great importance to the speech of women, not in men:

Lack of communication and information, excuse me, of information and support. And therefore I also think that be part of women's associations, such as OMEP<sup>2</sup> helps you a lot because it helps you to realize that all these fears, doubts, challenges, that this concerns are those that everyone has, and all women (E4-women).

Partnerships have emerged and things, as may arise other kind of associations but. . . I do not listen that you are mounting an association and women will come out. . . (E7-Man).

One of the issues associated with the rationalization of the working day as a measure to support entrepreneurship are

**Table 2 – Use of codes on the speech by gender on “support they would like/considered important to consider undertaking”.**

Code	Male speech	Female speech
Training support that he would have liked to receive to undertake	5	3
Family support that he would have liked to receive to undertake	2	2
Public support, through grants, market opportunities, training, funding	1	1
Social support groups, movements, etc.	0	4
State support that he would have liked to receive to undertake	0	3
Source: Authors.		

the working hours. However, they not are seen as strategic elements in view of its complete absence in the discourse of male entrepreneurs. But for women, without being strategic, the schedule change itself would be helpful:

The working hours in Spain, the change in the schedule. The schedule does not help us at all. Working hours are very long (E2-Women).

To make proposals that incorporate measures to support entrepreneurship of women is important to detect the deficiencies observed by those involved in its entrepreneurial activity. The query results (Table 2) show the importance of education for both genders, in particular, the demand for training to undertake the activity with expectations of success. However, some of the highlights in this analysis are the few references in the speech of women of the supports related to the family and the differences in the role that would be played the support of society (groups or movement) or the State, both with significant frequency components in the speech of entrepreneurial and absent in men.

The following quotes are illustrative of the importance of training in counseling to entrepreneurs and lifelong learning:

First that the institutions help to form to undertake, I mean, to guard you when you have a business idea, that there is an agency to look after you as OMEP, that tells you whether it is viable or not the business, and form you once that business is feasible in management skills. That would be essential (E1-Women).

The languages, which is fundamental to control English, and go out, to the training abroad [. . .]. That last question related to the control of languages and foreign trade control, all that kind of stuff, export, import, that kind of contents (E5-Women).

The fact that family support is not as recurrent in the discourse of entrepreneurs, does not mean that, when referring to him, not be granted great importance:

Having a supportive social environment, I mean, if you're married or have a couple who supports you, if you live with

<sup>1</sup> Instituto de Crédito Oficial (Official Credit Institute).

<sup>2</sup> Organización Regional de Mujeres Empresarias y Profesionales de Murcia. (Regional organization of Business and Professional Women of Murcia.)

your parents, who support you... because otherwise will be very complicated (E1-Women).

Family support itself, family support has always been supporting me in what I have already decided that may be the best as to whether decided to study or work, and in that sense I have never had any problems (E8-Man).

Public support (either through subsidies or other state interventions) has a small presence in the presentations of entrepreneurs, regardless of gender. In general, in the discourse of women there is a negative tone to which is a publicly funded entrepreneurship. The demands toward the state are articulated in the passive sense, that is, not to put obstacles:

The only thing that have to do the administration. Why do I say the only thing? Because I'm not agree with grants, repayable grants to help undertake I do not agree, they do help you get these loans at very low interest, though, loans you need to conduct your business, and then that continuous training should be paid by the State [...] that the public administrations don't put so many obstacles in undertaking, permits, licenses, taxation, paperwork ... and, of course, that when you undertake make as in England, until you don't have invoices for \$ 50,000 you don't paid taxes... Man, you are generating wealth, you are generating your job, and at least you're not asking me from the first moment to give you taxes. That would be more helpful than refundable grants (E1-Women).

A gender difference is also observed in relation to the demand for social support, much more present in the discourse of women entrepreneurs than for their male counterparts:

I would have missed someone who could get the idea I had of base and we have helped some people who had more or less similar ideas to get in touch and in common. [...] I think it's important that people who are at a particular time or situation, they tune into a particular idea, this is something very far, in my time was more independent, I now believe that entrepreneurship must be collective and must be a group of people who vibrate on the same wavelength and feel satisfied and happy with the same story. This can enhance human development. This is what I think that perhaps would miss (E3-Women).

The results of relational discourse analysis of entrepreneurs have identified some gender differences around the contributing factors of women entrepreneurship. In this regard, while training is important for both genders, meaning and demanded measures differ: while in men appears linked to business functions, women acquire a more global character, while the emphasis is on training as leadership skills.

Also conciliation has different nuances depending on gender. Women reflected in his speech the need for co-responsibility in domestic and family tasks, while in the intervention of men the right to reconcile appears. The third element in order of importance in empowering women entrepreneurship: State aid reflects a significant difference by gender. Therefore for men is a positive step, while for women are, in general, ineffective. This same difference is seen when

entrepreneurs are manifested on the support they would have needed to undertake. Basically women emphasize social support, while men insist on formal aspects such as training. The demand for action by the state is also different depending on the gender of the entrepreneur, reflecting the skepticism of women on its effectiveness compared to a positive perception of men.

## Conclusions

Gender differences identified in the analysis of the interviews are a starting point for the proposed measures to collect the actions leading to female entrepreneurship, both from the perception of women as from men prism. The results of the analysis of the interviews have been completed with the prouestas collected in the Nominal Group Techniques (NGT) made (Annex II). The interpretation of the data obtained allows four dimensions on which make the appropriate recommendations.

First, it emphasizes the social dimension. The importance given by women to the promotion of an entrepreneurial culture that channels the formation of such spirit and contribute to highlight and recognize the role-played by women in entrepreneurship. It values the action of social agents (groups, organizations and public and private institutions) in the promotion and diffusion of female entrepreneurship. From a jurisdictional point of view, it would be to develop a "social conscience" by and for female entrepreneurship.

Similarly, it derived from the emphasis on the integral education and equality of the individual; another aspect to promote is the equal gender education from an early age.

As for the institutional role, namely the state, its performance would be the empowerment of the above aspects in the field of education and the elimination of administrative obstacles to entrepreneurship.

From the *personal dimension*, the discourse of women entrepreneurs reveals the importance given to training as a factor to support entrepreneurship, which recommends undertake specific training programs for women entrepreneurs who specialize in economic and administrative functions related to its business without neglecting training in skills related to leadership and self-esteem, favoring the empowerment and self-confidence of entrepreneurs.

Third, in the *family dimension*, although it is not an aspect that particularly stands out for their frequency in the speech, still has a significant gender bias. Co-responsibility is a pending task, as is clear from the interventions collected, indicating that it should foster an equalitarian education from childhood that do not discriminate on grounds of gender and advocate for the allocation of work and family responsibilities. From a competence approach, it is women working with issues such as self-management that revolves around the emotional self-control and adaptability.

Finally, the *economic and financial dimension* is not so present in the discourse of entrepreneurial and although there is no doubt the need for resources to start a business, it does not seem the main problem of entrepreneurship. In any case, financial support to institutions demand as a way to perform

other actions, especially formative, that adequately manages the business, rather than a grant for entrepreneurship.

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