

Female entrepreneurship research: moving forward to new perspectives

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Abstract:

Introduction: Female entrepreneurship is a research field that has experienced a growth of attention and important achievements in the last decades (de Bruin, Brush, & Welter, 2006) (Hughes, Jennings, Brush, Carter, & Welter, 2012). In most of the countries, “women are making substantial contributions to all sectors of the economy (as entrepreneurs and employees)” (Gatewood, Brush, Carter, Greene, & Hart, 2009), but they are under-represented as new ventures owners (Allen, Link, & Rosenbaum, 2007), and their firms under-performed (Baughn, Chua, & Neupert, 2006) (Fairlie & Robb, 2009) (Bardasi, Sabarwal, & Terrell, 2011). This paper seeks to review the literature on the female entrepreneurship topic in the last 15 years (2004-2018), in order to give some directions for further research. First, the steps followed to select the articles included in this review, are described. Second, a review of the literature is presented based on three main contexts or spheres in which the entrepreneurial process is developed: the human or personal sphere, the socio-cultural sphere, and the economic-financial sphere. Third, future research topics are identified and related to the current work in order to have a better panorama of this area of study. Finally, conclusions are drawn and implications are pointed.

Methodology: There are many criteria for searching the current state of a research field. In order to review cutting-edge work on the female entrepreneurship research area, impact factor of journals, according to the Journal Citation Report (JCR), was the criterion used in this work (Davidsson & Wiklund, 2001) (Dean, Shook, & Payne, 2007) (Brush, Manolova, & Edelman, 2008) (Alvarez & Urbano, 2011). Those papers published in journals with “a citation impact factor above or near 2.0 (a widely used cut-off for journal quality in the management domain)” (Bruton, Ahlstrom, & Li, 2010), were selected from the Web of Science dataset (Santos, Marques, & Ferreira, 2018). Focusing on “journal-led rather than broader literature-based search approach” (Henry, Foss, & Ahl, 2016), helped to used top-ranked work. After removing those articles that were not really related to the topic and those with less than 10 citations in the search engine, a set of 35 articles was selected.

Literature review: The literature review was conducted based on three main contexts or spheres, within which the entrepreneurial process is developed and coincide with similar works (Cabrera & Mauricio, 2017) (Chreim, Spence, Crick, & Liao, 2018) (Santos, Marques, & Ferreira, 2018).

They are: 1) The human or personal sphere, which deals with perceptual variables such as self-perception, risk tolerance, fear of failure, and life satisfaction; 2) The socio-cultural sphere, which deals with family issues, masculinity, and career perspective; and 3) The economic-financial sphere, which deals with business growth, networks and sectors of the new venture, and venture capital and debt aversion of female entrepreneurs.

Results and Contributions: Research gaps were identified on the female entrepreneurship topic, keeping the same structure of the three contexts within which the entrepreneurial process is developed. The results pointed out three main directions for further research in female entrepreneurship: changes in methodological approaches, cross-cultural and cross-regional studies, and studies on self-perception. Most of the articles used a quantitative empirical methodological approach, which represents an opportunity for more qualitative methods to be used as it was aimed by several scholars (Ahl, 2006) (Ahl, 2007) (de Bruin, Brush, & Welter, 2007) (Patterson & Mavin, 2009) (Fairlie & Robb, 2009) (Collins & Low, 2010) (Hughes, Jennings, Brush, Carter, & Welter, 2012) (Marlow & Mcadam, 2012) (Henry, Foss, & Ahl, 2016). Cross-cultural studies are called to validate country and regional outcomes, especially those with a different ideology (Cetindamar, Gupta, Karadeniz, & ál., 2012), and with a different economic development (Bardasi, Sabarwal, & Terrell, 2011) (Coad & Tamvada, 2012). Further research on female entrepreneurs self-perception, moves toward: self-confidence, attitude and perceptions (Wagner, 2007) (Diaz-Garcia & Jimenez- Moreno, 2010) (Achtenhagen & Welter, 2011); and expectations related to family, career (Bardasi, Sabarwal, & Terrell, 2011) (Marlow & Mcadam, 2012) (McGowan, Redeker, Cooper, & Greenan, 2012) (Jooana, 2018), and business growth (Morris, Miyasaki, Watters, & Coombes, 2006).

Implications and Value: This work will help researchers better understand the current state of research on female entrepreneurship and research opportunities in this field. The need for more qualitative approaches (Henry, Foss, & Ahl, 2016) was evident across the reviewed articles, which may help to “adequately incorporate the “reality” of women’s entrepreneurship” (de Bruin, Brush, & Welter, 2007), and not to “reinforce the idea that women are different than men” (Ahl, 2006). Cross-cultural studies was a constant demand in most of the papers, which seems like an opportunity to build a women entrepreneurship scholarly community (de Bruin, Brush, & Welter, 2006). Additionally, policy makers could also use these findings to design strategies that promote

female entrepreneurship. Further research on using systematic and multivariate statistical analysis could be used in order to access more information from the papers that were selected. Likewise, a larger set of data could be extracted using different criteria. The value of this work is to present a classification of the state of the art on female entrepreneurship research, according to three main contexts or spheres within the entrepreneurial process is developed, as well as the new directions toward this research domain is moving, through the identification of its research opportunities.

Keywords: female, woman, gender, entrepreneurship, new venture.