

Women and Entrepreneurship in the Third World

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Abstract

Research on the role of women in socio-economic change has received little attention from management scholars, especially the entrepreneurial behavior of women. Most research has mainly focused on women in the developed and developing countries, yet, women in third world countries are largely ignored in entrepreneurship research. There has recently been a growing interest as to why do women engage in entrepreneurial activities, and how some socio-economic factors may influence their entrepreneurial behaviors. Combining the socio-economic factors with the extant literature on entrepreneurship is growingly an important issue, let alone the women in the third world countries. In this paper, I focus on the entrepreneurial potential of women in third world countries, an issue that is often neglected in the entrepreneurship literature. Specifically, I use the emancipation arguments to introduce a proposition that the need for independency and freedom will have stronger effects on triggering entrepreneurial behavior of third world countries' women than their counterparts in advanced countries. Furthermore, I argue that the less the political representation of women in these countries, the greater the likelihood for them to develop entrepreneurial intentions and behaviors. Other socio-political arguments are considered, discussion and directions for future research follows.

Keywords: Liberation, political representation, entrepreneurial intentions.

Introduction

There has been growing interest in women's role in socio-economic change recently, and the research on women's entrepreneurial role and behavior is part of a continued body of research that addresses how women differ from their men counterparts in many economic and social behaviors, including their intention, ability, and boldness to enterprise (Womenomics revisited; economics focus.2007; Hanson, 2009). In fact, Hanson (2007) argue that women tend to use the entrepreneurial activities as a way to reach certain outcomes, including the hope to change their lives and more importantly the norms of the place in which they live. Several scholars have emphasized that women do possess the qualities needed for an entrepreneurial behavior to exist (Calás, Smircich, & Bourne, 2009; Harvey, 2005; Holmquist & Carter, 2009). Several streams of research have focused on the study of women entrepreneurship and how they differ from their men counterparts, their motivations, their entrepreneurial behavior, and the likelihood of their deviation from the established norms (Acs, Bardasi, Estrin, & Svejnar, 2011; Hanson, 2009). However, with exception to few studies (Das & Mohiuddin, 2015; Nieva, 2015; Udmale, 2014) scholars have tended to neglect women in the less developed countries, their motives, their cognitive abilities, and their entrepreneurial orientation.

In her 2009 article, Susan Hanson argued that most of the work on entrepreneurial activities of women have been focused on the industrial nations. Moreover, she argued that most of the literature have focused on men and has seen women as a small portion of the whole phenomena of entrepreneurship. She also argued that such neglect from academics is unjustifiable taking into account the growing business ownership by women according to the OECD reports (Lowrey, 2006; OECD, 2004; Hanson, 2009).

It is very legitimate to suppose that women in less developed countries may have greater motives for change, especially in countries where they don't have much social prestige and decent role in leading economic activities, governmental positions and jobs, and also being part of men-women networks as the case in developed countries (*The power to change : Women in the third world redefine their environment*1992; Huston & Overseas Development Council, 1979; Lindio-McGovern & Wallimann, 2009). In this paper, I propose that women in such countries have greater motives to initiate entrepreneurial activities as means of driving social change that concerns their position in their respective societies.

This essay focuses mainly on the entrepreneurial role of women in three ways: first. Women in less developed countries have less attention from society, they have less independency, and they have less balanced work-family relationships. Second, women in these under-developed countries have less educational opportunities which may limit their career path and future plans, making them mostly dependent on men in their families or on their very narrow job horizons. Third, women in these countries will have less opportunities to network with men, business leaders, governmental officials, and also governmental organizations which will lead stronger women-women ties. These three foundational concepts can lead to several outcomes with regard to their entrepreneurial orientation and activities. In this essay, I try to shed lights on the effect of such phenomenon

on the role of women in entrepreneurship as means of freedom.

Entrepreneurial intentions and Liberation motives:

According to Scott (1986), gender is about the perceived differences between women and men at all levels, including power, abilities, and roles. He argued that it is mainly about unequal power. Hanson (2007) in her review of the geography-gender-entrepreneurship interrelationships stated that gender would be most accurate if related to geographical context, in which the perceived differences and their outcomes occur. Based upon these two notions; it's reasonable to assume that there are geographical aspect of women-entrepreneurship relationships that have been mostly neglected or rarely researched at best, especially for the under-developed countries.

For instance, in a third world country there is expectations as well as documented arguments that women do not have equal opportunities as men do. By equal opportunities I mean opportunities in education, advanced and diverse jobs, promotion, and therefore networking (Brock-Utne, 1989; Mehta, 2009).

(Engels, 1972) in his famous book "The origin of the family, private property, and the state" argued that women emancipation can only occur though enabling them to take greater role in work and production. The underlying notion here is that enabling them to be productive and non-dependent on others for their needs and therefore their life well-being. In fact, a famous statement he wrote in his book is quoted herein:

"The emancipation of woman will only be possible when woman can take part in the production on a large, social scale, and domestic work no longer claims anything but an insignificant amount of her time." (P.199-200).

There is an apparent fact that women in the developed countries have seen much more advances than their counterparts in undeveloped countries. The gap, although is being slowly tightened, is still large to ignore. The freedom and independency are two faces for the same coin, and this is a universal fact that cannot be denied. For women, ever since the industrial revolution and the following changes that have been taking places in the advanced countries, mostly western countries have helped them to gain acknowledgements, more rights, more freedom, and more space in both public and private domains with regard to workplace (Cook, 2008; Goloboy, 2008).

Gender inequality is a topic of interest for many sociologists as well as economists.

The literature has mostly emphasized that despite the advances and great efforts have been made so far to eliminate such a phenomena, it is still appearing here and there, and there is an evidence documented about the existence of such phenomena in education, pay, promotion, career opportunities and many other aspects (Jacobs & Gerson, 2004; Nelson & Bridges, 1999). However, it is a more prevalent marvels in the third world countries (Berreman, Zaretsky, & Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, 1981; Brock-Utne, 1989; Chant, 2010; Kucera, 2002). Indeed, this is a natural result of the less educational opportunities, importance given to the women in these societies due to traditions and norms, less interactions with important entities in these societies, and less networking opportunities with individuals other than their women counterparts and men in their closed circles. One cannot expect women in less developed countries then to have the ability to get promoted in any male-dominated place.

One cannot also expect women to have chances of greater governmental positions, nor do they have a chance to be active in political sphere. All these circumstances will make these women more dependent on men in their life. However, the nature of human being should stand the same for both women and men, with slight variation perhaps, with regard to the dependency attitude. Such women in such less developed countries will then have greater motive and attitude towards dependency. This dependency, taken into account the domination of men for the large-scale public sphere, will be more likely an outcome of actions that these women think of as means of achieving their own thing, their own goals, their own life, and more importantly find something that would make them feel dependent truly and practically.

Having said that, it is then reasonable to assume that these women will seek different approaches through which they can explore new opportunities away from the male-dominated many fields. In support of this notion, Hanson (2007) stated the following:

"Gender inequalities are both the reason for and the result of the processes that are entailed in launching and sustaining a business" (Hanson, 2007: P.250).

Therefore, it is women's intent in independency that would drive their different strategies in proving themselves and achieving self-esteem, financial dependency, work-family balance, and also social prestige.

Since gender equality can take different forms, I would only focus on few aspects in this essay. First, women that do not have the opportunity to pursue education for example, will have greater independency on men in their life, will have less prestige in society, will have less networking opportunities, and will have more ties with their uneducated women counterparts. Thus, these women will have greater intent to prove themselves, to take greater role in society, to change their low-paying careers, and to achieve recognition and balance in their work-family sphere. Therefore,

Proposition 1: women in undeveloped countries that have low or no educational opportunities will have

greater intent in achieving independency, thus, will be more likely to have entrepreneurial thoughts.

Variations across countries: media, country of influence, freedom of speech and political system

Molyneaux (1985) coined two terms that are related to gender and power inequality, practical and strategic interests. Hanson's (2007) article describes the former as the efforts made by women to improve their "own and families' livelihoods" (P.253), while not attempting to cause disturbance to the dominant logics and norms in their societies or destabilizing the power system. The latter is the one that is more crucial as described by Hanson. It is the process through which women challenges the rules and do not abide them to create social recognition and societal importance. Since there are variations between countries with respect to the dominant logics, perceptions, and norms that are related to women (Krook & Childs, 2010), one can assume that the degree to which the difficulty for women to create societal recognition will vary accordingly. In countries where the media plays significant role for example, and that the media isn't biased and not controlled by anti-women activists or at least have some degree of freedom in expressing support for women's rights; I would expect women to have greater likelihood of having the chance and the courage to express themselves in an entrepreneurial ways.

(Jaquette & Summerfield, 2006) argued that women need to challenge cultural conducts that hinder women's ability to demand their rights and access to power. However, the author asserted on the role played by the media in doing so. Media support for women's rights vary even in the undeveloped countries, therefore I expect women's entrepreneurial thought and activities to vary accordingly. Some third world countries are still strongly attached to the norm that women need to stay home, despite all the efforts made by the world and the international organizations. In some other countries, women do have some rights, but not as much as they do in the western world. Therefore,

Proposition 2: Women in countries where the media is supportive of women, will have greater chance to think, express, and attempt to achieve their recognition through entrepreneurial thoughts and activities.

Political representation

The political role of women varies across countries (Mourtada-Sabbah & Gully, 2003), and this variation in the political engagement of women would indeed cause variations in their feelings of the need for achievement and motivation for independency. In order to achieve such independency and reach a satisfactory level of self-actualization, women need enhanced social networks and also to prove themselves capable of contributing something to societies, other than their very typical "house-duties" (Trotz & Peake, 2001).

If women are not fully engaged in the political activities in their countries, which mostly the case in third world countries; we would expect them to seek some substitute approach; in which they can reach self-dependency and self-actualization (Fox & Lawless, 2014).

In fact, despite the growing proportion of women who engage in entrepreneurial behavior in both advanced and developing countries, women in the under-developed countries have been mostly ignored in the entrepreneurship research (Brock-Utne, 1989; Galindo Martín & Ribeiro, 2012; Kariv, 2013). Some scholars have argued that there are variations across the different minority groups with regard to the incentives and hindrances of their entrepreneurial potential, among these groups are women. (Wood, Davidson, & Fielden, 2012) reported that younger; older; women; ethnic; immigrant; lesbian, gay and bisexual; disabled; and indigenous entrepreneurs varied significantly in the motivators that either encouraged or hindered their entrepreneurial potential, with some groups wanted to achieve financial stability - others sought for enhanced self-esteem, or to change existing social and economic norms.

Political environment represents a prestigious space for self-esteem for both women and men. However, not all political environments nor cultures are equally welcoming and friendly with women. That is, women cannot achieve such goal of being engaged in the political life easily in countries where general culture, political regulations, religion, or any other reasons don't welcome such presence of women in the political scene. Nonetheless, women can and are eager to seek some substitute approach of enhancing their self-esteem, which is becoming independent, active, and have financial positions that would increase their social and economic contributions. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that in countries where women are not sufficiently engaged in the political life, not sufficiently represented in the political body of the government, and not politically active, their entrepreneurial intentions would be even stronger. Therefore,

Proposition 3: In countries where women are not adequately engaged politically, they will have greater entrepreneurial intentions.

Country of influence

Each undeveloped country, or the vast majority of them, used to be either a colony or occupied by western country. For example, Jordan used to be under the British occupation, Syria used to be under the French, and South Africa was once occupied by the British too. Even after these countries left their colonies, they have since maintained presence in many forms, including very strong political ties, non-governmental organizations, cultural delegates, and so on. It is noticeable that countries which were under the British, are being more open towards women's active roles and engagements at the state's level. Therefore, depending on the country of influence on each third world country, women will have varying degrees of freedom of expression, social

recognition, and therefore their tendency towards entrepreneurial orientations, thoughts, and activities. I expect that if the country of influence has strong emphasis on women rights in their foreign policy agenda, the influenced country will have more margin of freedom for women, more political representations, more governmental positions and jobs, and also more involvement in the typical business. This will lead to lower degree of dependency on men, and therefore weaker intent towards entrepreneurial thoughts, orientation, and activities. Therefore,

Proposition 4: In countries that are influenced by advanced countries with strong emphasis on women's rights, women will have weaker intents to engage in entrepreneurial thoughts, develop entrepreneurial orientation, and initiate entrepreneurial activities due to their already acknowledged role in society and at the official levels.

Discussion and future research directions:

I believe that the literature on women's roles in the entrepreneurship field has been lacking in that scholars have rarely focused on women, considering the growing importance of women as business owners. Furthermore, even scholars who have studied women and entrepreneurship, they have focused on women in the advanced countries for the most part. This essay was begun as a way to start complementing the literature in the international entrepreneurship arena. Specifically, there are several aspects that undeveloped countries differ from their developed counterparts. With regard to women and entrepreneurship, several factors come into play to affect the women's roles and entrepreneurial orientation, including education and media, as well as political systems and country of influence. My aim was then to see whether women vary in their entrepreneurial orientation due to the differing aspects aforementioned.

Future research would consider country-level socio-economic factors and how do they influence the role of women in entrepreneurship. Moreover, the role of non-governmental organizations that promote women's rights in influencing greater role for women in enterprising and pioneering at the business levels. Including several intervening mechanisms and how they might influence the degree of women entrepreneurial orientation would be another point to consider in the future research.

Another related area for future research to consider is the interrelationships between different socio-economic indicators and the motives for women to engage in entrepreneurial behavior. I have only addressed few socio-economic factors in this paper. However, future work may consider for example how the different levels of education would promote entrepreneurial behavior for women, taking into account the interaction effect of obtaining a job, the type of job obtained, and the career mobility and progress potential and how might that influence women behavior from an entrepreneurial standpoint.

Geo-political factors, such as stability, level of advancement at regional levels, the presence of non-governmental organizations that promote women engagement in societies, all are fruitful areas for further exploration in future research.

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