

Entrepreneurial Preferences in Oman: A Gender-based differentiation Analysis

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Abstract

Purpose: The research objective was to critically analyze the factors responsible for the gender differences in Oman Entrepreneurship and to critically analyze the prevailing gender differences amongst the motivating factors and the survival factors in running the businesses in Oman.

Design/methodology/approach: The research data was collected using a well-structured questionnaire and the data was obtained personally. 381 samples were collected from the population who were reported to be successful entrepreneurs. The selection was obtained from the entrepreneurs' list provided by the Government Scheme Agencies in Oman like SANAD/RIYADA and the analysis was done using SPSS.

Findings: The study revealed that both genders considered 'To obtain a social status', 'To use innovative ideas', 'To become own boss', and 'Success of other entrepreneurs' as the motivating factors. Further, males have also considered experiences and professional contacts whereas females have considered working independently and excelling with their self-confidence.

The study also revealed that both genders insisted on Start-up capital, Self-confidence, Working capital, and Previous business experience, and Religious consciousness factors as the essential factors to run the businesses. Further, male entrepreneurs considered Training as one of the factors required to run the business whereas the female entrepreneurs considered the Right choice of location as a required factor.

Research limitations/implications: It is recommended to address the gender differences of entrepreneurship in policies to support private-sector development in Oman and to design effective Entrepreneurship education programs for the future. It is required to follow up on the performance of the female-owned entrepreneurial start-ups so that their goals and objectives can be successfully fulfilled during their life cycle. It is also suggested that the training should be considered essential when designing strategies and policies stimulating entrepreneurial activity for both male and female entrepreneurs.

Social Implications : Through gender differences, the trends in marketing can be identified which will help to raise awareness for how to improve global marketing standards. Facilitating timely finance in the form of start-up capital, working capital is a must as the entrepreneurs in Oman consider financial assistance as a must to run the business. Previous business experience or educating them to gain experience in the line of their business interest will enable the entrepreneurs to become successful entrepreneurs.

Originality / Value: There is no study on gender differences that have been carried out in Oman within entrepreneurial activities. This paper examines the gender difference prevailing amidst entrepreneurship in Oman. This research included only the successful entrepreneurs who were advanced under the Governmental Schemes through RIYADA/SANAD, Oman.

Keywords: SMEs in Oman, Gender differences, Female Entrepreneurs, Push-pull factors, Motivating Factors, Factors required to run/for the Survival of the Business.

Introduction

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) contribute extensively to the economic development and employment in many countries and thus the

Omani youth are coming forward to take up Entrepreneurship rather than looking for jobs. Females and males might have similarities concerning their opinions about entrepreneurship. However, propensities toward entrepreneurship have gender differences while starting businesses (Goel et al., 2015). In particular, entrepreneurial motivations which are mostly known as push or pull factors differ from males to females. There are gender differences in entrepreneurial traits as well. Those who aspire to start new businesses might have different views that may not lead to entrepreneurial success. Male and female entrepreneurs have differences of opinions, thoughts, ambitions, and perspectives concerning the future development of entrepreneurship. The influence of gender upon females' enterprise ownership is noticeable as the males-owned enterprises have been recognized while the females-owned enterprises have almost been exclusive.

In many countries, the rate of entrepreneurial activities by females is lower than activities of males (Pines et al., 2010). Oman is no exception to it. The entrepreneurial propensity of females accounts for huge gender differences in entrepreneurial efforts (Malach-Pines & Schwartz, 2008). Although the females are keen on starting their businesses in Oman due to the prevailing culture and other practical difficulties and obvious constraints they do not end up with starting new businesses than males though they are also equally willing to contribute to society to which they belong (Al Jahwari et al., 2020). Females seem to experience discrimination and face more difficulties while starting up new businesses. Males have traditionally enjoyed stronger formal networking positions than females because they have more often worked in managerial and executive positions before starting businesses. This difference could have implications in their business performances.

The gender-based differences in entrepreneurial activities emerge during the start-up, running, or survival of the businesses. They also confirmed that the disturbing feature of females willing to engage in entrepreneurship activities compared to males is decreasing. Motivating factors can include bringing an idea to the market, to run own business, obtaining social status, etc. With respect to gender differences in running and surviving in businesses, many factors have been identified with some country-specific features (Padnos, 2018). Investigated gender differences in perceiving factors provide access to the capital, deep knowledge of business, and singularity of focus as success factors in running and maintaining a business.

The role of gender differences among potential entrepreneurs appears to be in the form of psycho-sociological traits, incentives, and principal obstacles.

Research Questions

1. What are the factors that create basic gender differences in Entrepreneurship?
2. What are the gender differences existing in the motivating factors and the survival factors to run the businesses?

Research Objectives

1. To critically analyze the factors responsible for the gender difference in Entrepreneurship in Oman.
2. To critically analyze the prevailing gender differences amongst the motivating factors and the survival factors in running the businesses in Oman.

Problem Statement

Gender-based differences in entrepreneurship from a new perspective called the integrated perspective. This perspective might focus on gender differences in entrepreneurial characteristics, challenges, and performances.

The gender gap in start-up activities determines whether it is family status or employment status that is responsible for the observed gender gap. Studying the characteristics of the gender-differentiated businesses will help to identify the perceptions and the challenges faced by them individually which may not be similar due to which their performances may also differ. The comparative differences using a gender comparative approach will help to explore the nature of potential gender differences within entrepreneurial motivations.

Review of Literature

Considering the risk and financial factors it is critical to say that gender blindness prevails within entrepreneurship ([Marlow & Swail, 2014](#)).

Motivating Factors

[Humbert and Drew \(2010\)](#) found that there is a strong gender effect on entrepreneurship on motivational factors. Gender differences occur during the incidence of motivations. The large gender differences were found by [Malach-Pines and Schwartz \(2008\)](#) in the willingness to start a business. Gender differences persist due to resource attributes in motivations, and attitudes. Gender non-discrimination and working conditions were the motivating factors for female students to take up entrepreneurship in tourism-related businesses ([Khan & Krishnamurthy, 2016](#)). In the global marketing environment, it is essential to retain a gender-neutral stance to maintain the entrepreneurial ecosystem ([Ratten, 2017](#)). The challenges faced by female and male entrepreneurs differ and affect their performances accordingly ([Bardasi et al., 2007](#)).

Female entrepreneurs were the untapped resources having the potential to contribute to the economic development of a country and they could be considered as the engine of economic growth ([Ahl, 2002](#); [Verheul, 2005](#)). Female entrepreneurs possess highly distinguished preferences about the establishment of entrepreneurial firms ([Babbitt et al., 2015](#)). Females were more motivated by a desire for independence and by their children ([Orhan & Scott, 2001](#)). Females were motivated by social and relational factors whereas males were more motivated by finance and autonomy ([Wilson et al., 2004](#)). The percent of women entrepreneurs is higher in countries where the general income per capita is small and where women have no other option for making a living ([Pines et al., 2010](#)). Females have the fear of failure while starting a business than men ([Al Buraiki & Khan, 2018](#); [Cañizares & García, 2010](#)). Females mostly have friends and family members as their mentors while men take professional consultants as mentors ([Robinson & Stubberud, 2009](#)).

Factors required to run/survival of the business

Gender differences appear in business survival factors as females concentrate in low capital intensive industries as less funding is required ([Al Badi & Khan, 2020](#); [Klapper & Parker, 2011](#)). Both genders believe that further education can correct their problem ([Kourilsky & Walstad, 1998](#)). The factor preventing the survival and growth of SMEs is the non-availability of financing ([Fatoki & Asah, 2011](#)). Financial constraints impediments the operations of the female entrepreneurs causing difficulties in the establishment and the survival of the business ([Khan, 2015](#)). The gender gap might amplify if attention by the financial assistance and guidance is not given to address the result in a hike in challenges facing female entrepreneurs ([Hill et al., 2006](#); [Witbooi & Ukpere, 2011](#)). Most of the businesses operated by females reported having failed/became sick units due to difficulty in obtaining finance from the financial institutions, lack of skills, and low level of education ([Bekele & Worku, 2008](#)). Education, social, and family background influence the differences between female and male entrepreneurs. ([Narayanasamy et al., 2011](#)). Training on starting a new business has a greater influence on female entrepreneurial activity ([Tsyganova & Shirokova, 2010](#)).

The gender differences in the employment-related variables are more significant than those in the family-related variables in affecting the gender gap ([Adachi & Hisada, 2017](#)). Females' lesser experience needed remedial education or mentoring but the prior managerial experience did not affect the survival prospects of both the gender's new business ventures ([Boden Jr & Nucci, 2000](#)).

After going through the above review of literature, the two major push-pull factors namely the variables – motivating factors and factors required to run the business have been considered for our study as they give a bias to the gender.

Research Methodology

A list of 988 entrepreneurs was obtained from RIYADA/SANAD who were guided and advanced by them. The research data was collected using a well-structured questionnaire and the data was obtained personally. 607 entrepreneurs did not respond to the questionnaires for various reasons (viz. 55 refused to participate as they have closed their businesses, 270 did not respond and did not show interest to participate and 282 entrepreneurs' data was erroneous). Only 381 samples were collected from the population who were reported to be successful entrepreneurs.

The collected data was compiled, tabulated, and analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Test of reliability and validity was conducted before undertaking the other statistical analyses. Statistical analyses like the chi-square test, Kolmogorov-Smirnov ranking analyses were conducted to obtain

the results. The weighted mean was obtained for the motivating factors and the factors required to run the businesses, segregating the data based on gender and were ranked.

For easy identification, the ranking by the respondents has been distinguished with different colors. The statement which ranked first was highlighted with green color. Second Rank was highlighted with yellow color. The third rank was highlighted with saffron color. The fourth rank was highlighted with blue color. Fifth rank with violet and Sixth rank with gray color.

Findings

Table 1. Motivational Factors preference of Males

Statements	Ranks						Total	Mean Rank
	1	2	3	4	5	6		
My intention of starting a business was to earn more money	39	18	26	21	15	90	209	0.1392
To obtain a social status	84	38	18	23	17	43	223	0.1947
To become own boss	49	80	23	17	18	31	218	0.1975
To use innovative ideas	34	36	69	23	19	31	212	0.1792
Success of other entrepreneurs	15	15	28	27	20	4	109	0.1756
Previous business experience	19	27	38	58	27	32	201	0.1566
To work independently	26	32	31	42	70	23	224	0.1550
To earn self-respect	3	12	15	15	27	9	81	0.1446
Self-confidence	6	10	21	26	25	15	103	0.1447
Professional Contacts in the line of business	6	5	3	10	10	5	39	0.1563
Financial institution support / banks	3	6	6	6	14	5	40	0.1464
Government schemes encouraged me to venture into a business	7	12	13	23	29	3	87	0.1554
Total	291	291	291	291	291	291	209	0.1621

Calculated K-S value: $0.1621 > K.S. \text{ value for } 55 \text{ df } (0.0797 = \frac{1.36}{\sqrt{291}})$.

Thus the null hypothesis got rejected and hence it was clear that there was a significant relationship between the motivational factors of the males and rank factors.

From Table 1 it is evident that 'To become own boss' (0.1975) was ranked first by the respondents among the motivating factors. 'To obtain a social status' (0.1947) was ranked second by the respondents. 'To use innovative ideas' (0.1792) was ranked third by the respondents. 'Success of other entrepreneurs' (0.1756) was ranked fourth by the respondents. 'Previous business experience' (0.1566) was ranked fifth by the respondents. 'Professional Contacts in the line of business' (0.1563) was ranked sixth by the respondents.

Table 2. Motivational Factors preference of Females

Statements	Ranks						Total	Mean Rank
	1	2	3	4	5	6		
My intention of starting a business was to earn more money	9	13	3	6	7	28	66	0.1378
To obtain a social status	27	9	7	8	2	7	60	0.2143
To become own boss	10	23	6	7	4	14	64	0.1801
To use innovative ideas	11	11	23	4	2	9	60	0.1889
Success of other entrepreneurs	4	3	10	12	7	0	36	0.1706
Previous business experience	2	8	7	13	15	12	57	0.1345
To work independently	14	7	8	8	19	8	64	0.1644
To earn self-respect	1	5	7	5	5	1	24	0.1687
Self-confidence	4	5	10	12	8	4	43	0.1606
Professional Contacts in the line of business	3	0	2	1	6	2	14	0.1463
Financial institution support / banks	1	2	1	4	5	0	13	0.1538
Government schemes encouraged me to venture into a business	4	4	6	10	10	5	39	0.1502
Total	90	90	90	90	90	90	540	0.1642

Calculated K-S value: $0.1642 > K.S. \text{ value for } 55 \text{ df } (0.1433 = \frac{1.36}{\sqrt{90}})$.

Thus the null hypothesis got rejected and hence it was clear that there was a significant relationship between the motivational factors of the females and rank factors.

From Table 2 it is evident that 'To obtain a social status' (0.2143) was ranked as first by the respondents. 'To use innovative ideas' (0.1889) was ranked second by the respondents. 'To become own boss' (0.1801) was ranked third by the respondents. 'Success of other entrepreneurs' (0.1706) was ranked fourth by the respondents. 'To work independently' (0.1644) was ranked fifth by the respondents. 'Self-confidence' (0.1606) was ranked sixth by the respondents.

Table 3. Males' Preference of the Factors Required to Run the Business

Statements	Ranks						Total	Mean Rank
	1	2	3	4	5	6		
Start-up Capital	123	37	22	22	10	11	225	0.2345
Working Capital	14	84	33	16	23	17	187	0.1902
Training	17	20	32	21	21	34	145	0.1540
Labour	1	13	18	49	19	33	133	0.1293
Right location	5	32	37	40	51	22	187	0.1482
Government support	9	15	25	37	37	23	146	0.1425
Previous business experience	45	34	61	23	22	24	209	0.1871
Education / Technical Qualification	4	5	11	21	17	21	79	0.1272
Family Support	7	6	9	13	8	14	57	0.1479
Professional Contacts in the line of business	1	2	2	13	7	14	39	0.1111

Support from a Financial Institution / bank	5	5	11	7	13	18	59	0.1324
Recommendation from Big investors in the same line of business	1	3	4	7	25	10	50	0.1124
Self-confidence	40	21	14	14	17	14	120	0.1948
Straight forwardness	7	10	6	4	15	26	68	0.1289
Religious consciousness	12	4	6	4	6	10	42	0.1701
Total	291	291	291	291	291	291	1746	0.1540

Calculated K-S value: $0.1540 > K.S. \text{ value for } 55 \text{ df } (0.0797 = \frac{1.36}{\sqrt{291}})$.

Thus the null hypothesis got rejected and hence it was clear that there was a significant relationship between the motivational factors of the males and rank factors.

From Table 3 it is evident that ‘Start-up Capital’ (0.2345) was ranked first by the respondents. ‘Self-confidence’ (0.1948) was ranked second by the respondents. ‘Working Capital’ (0.1902) was ranked third by the respondents. ‘Previous business experience’ (0.1871) was ranked fourth by the respondents. ‘Religious consciousness’ (0.1701) was ranked fifth by the respondents. ‘Training’ (0.1540) was ranked sixth by the respondents.

Table 4. Females’ Preference of the Factors Required to Run the Business

Statements	Rank						Total	Mean Rank
	1	2	3	4	5	6		
Start-up Capital	35	5	6	3	5	3	57	0.2348
Working Capital	10	5	10	6	5	7	43	0.1772
Training	3	6	8	6	6	8	37	0.1519
Labour	0	6	7	16	6	10	45	0.1354
Right location	4	15	11	8	15	5	58	0.1658
Government support	5	6	10	8	6	9	44	0.1569
Previous business experience	12	7	18	11	7	10	65	0.1729
Education / Technical Qualification	1	14	4	8	14	5	46	0.1542
Family Support	1	1	4	3	1	3	13	0.1502
Self-confidence	14	5	3	6	5	4	37	0.1969
Professional Contacts in the line of business	0	3	1	0	3	3	10	0.1333
Support from a Financial Institution / bank	0	1	3	5	1	7	17	0.1148
Recommendation from Big investors in the same line of business	0	8	2	5	8	6	29	0.1396
Straight forwardness	1	6	1	3	6	9	26	0.1282
Religious consciousness	4	2	2	2	2	1	13	0.1941
Total	90	90	90	90	90	90	540	0.1604

Calculated K-S value: $0.1604 > K.S. \text{ value for } 55 \text{ df } (0.1434 = \frac{1.36}{\sqrt{90}})$.

Thus the null hypothesis got rejected and hence it was clear that there was a significant relationship between the motivational factors of the females and rank factors.

From Table 4 it is evident that ‘Start-up Capital’ (0.2348) was ranked first by the respondents. ‘Self-confidence’ (0.1969) was ranked second by the respondents. ‘Religious consciousness’ (0.1941) was ranked third by the respondents. ‘Working Capital’ (0.1772) was ranked fourth by the respondents. ‘Previous

business experience' (0.1729) was ranked fifth by the respondents. 'Right location' (0.1658) was ranked sixth by the respondents.

Table 5 Comparison Between Males and Females Choices of Motivating Factors

Rank	Males	Females	Similarity
1	To become my own boss	To obtain a social status	Different
2	To obtain a social status	To use innovative ideas	Different
3	To use innovative ideas	To become my own boss	Different
4	The success of other entrepreneurs	The success of other entrepreneurs	Same
5	Previous business experience	To work independently	Different
6	Professional Contacts in the line of business	Self-confidence	Different

It is evident from Table 5 that the order of preference of the motivating factors for males and females were not the same. But it was also noted that the first three choices got interchanged and the fourth choice was the same. But the fifth and sixth ranking was different.

Table 6 Comparison between Males' and Females' Choices of Factors Required to Run the Business

Rank	Males	Females	Similarity
1	Start-up Capital	Start-up Capital	Same
2	Self-confidence	Self-confidence	Same
3	Working Capital	Religious consciousness	Different
4	Previous business experience	Working Capital	Different
5	Religious consciousness	Previous business experience	Different
6	Training	Right location	Different

It is evident from Table 6 that the order of preference of the first two factors required to run the business for males and females were the same. But the next three choices got interchanged and the last choice was different.

Conclusion

From the above findings, it was observed that the major motivating factors for males to become entrepreneurs were 'To become own boss', 'To obtain a social status' and 'To use innovative ideas'. 'Success of other entrepreneurs' and 'Previous experience' were also motivating them to start a new business.

But the female respondents considered 'To obtain a social status', 'To use innovative ideas' and 'To become own boss' as their motivating factors. 'Success of other entrepreneurs', 'To work independently' and 'Self-confidence' were other motivating factors.

From the comparison of the gender choices, it was clear that besides the general preferences, the males preferred to use their experiences and professional contacts whereas females preferred to work independently and excel with their self-confidence.

Our result is similar to the result of [Orhan and Scott \(2001\)](#) that the incidence of motivations by female entrepreneurs was influenced by independence. Further, the result is also similar to the result of [Babbitt et al. \(2015\)](#) that the females preferred to have self-confidence during the establishment of their new businesses. Our result is also similar to the finding of [\(Narayanasamy et al., 2011\)](#) that though there were male entrepreneurs who had the impact on the professional contacts and usage of previous business experiences, women preferred to work independently.

It is also evident that the factors considered by males required mainly to run the business were 'Start-up Capital', 'Self-confidence' and 'Working capital finance'. 'Previous business experience', 'Religious consciousness' and 'Training' were also considered as the factors required to run the business.

Similarly, the major factors considered by females required mainly to run the business were 'Start-up Capital', 'Self-confidence' and 'Religious consciousness'. 'Working capital finance', 'Previous business experience' and 'Right location' were also considered as the factors required to run the business.

Comparing both the choices of preferences, it was noted that the males included training as one of the factors required to run the business whereas the females preferred the right choice of location as a required factor. However, both of them insisted on Start-up capital, Self-confidence, working capital, and previous business experience, and religious consciousness factors.

Recommendations

Based on the above conclusion the following recommendations were made:

- It is suggested to address the gender differences of entrepreneurship in policies to support private-sector development in Oman and to design effective Entrepreneurship education programs for the future.
- Government assistance and the financial institutional support for providing finance should be reviewed and financial guidance should also be provided.
- It is also suggested that the training should be considered essential when designing strategies and policies stimulating entrepreneurial activity for both male and female entrepreneurs.
- It is required to follow up on the performance of the female-owned entrepreneurial set-ups so that their goals and objectives can be successfully fulfilled during their life cycle.
- Through gender differences, the trends in marketing can be identified which will help to raise awareness for how to improve global marketing standards.
- Previous business experience or educating them to gain experience in the line of their business interest will enable the entrepreneurs to become successful entrepreneurs.
- Facilitating timely finance in the form of start-up capital, working capital is a must as the entrepreneurs in Oman consider financial assistance as a must to run the business.
- To tap the potential of the entrepreneurial youth towards the economic development of the country, their self-confidence can be triggered through proper guidance in establishing their entrepreneurial units in the right location at the industrial estates' facilities provided by Public Authority for SMEs Development (PASMED), Oman.

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