



Female-driven social entrepreneurship in service business

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Abstract

The United Nations has stated that to meet the 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda, analysis of the development and impact of women entrepreneurship is needed. Based on data from the Web of Science, an initial analysis of research on both women entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship was performed. Although the first published article date back to 2004, it was not until 2014 when scholars began to study women social entrepreneurship more systematically. This special issue covers these two areas in conjunction, with an added emphasis on service business.

Keywords Women entrepreneurship · Social entrepreneurship · Social inclusion · Service business

1 Introduction

The first article ever to link women entrepreneurs and social entrepreneurship was “The payoff from women’s rights” by Isobel Coleman (2004). Nothing was published on these two fields of research until 2014, when academia began to pay more attention. According to Figueroa-Domecq et al. (2020), it is essential to continue conducting research on the influence of gender on sustainable entrepreneurship because women entrepreneurship is a key factor in achieving the sustainable development goals (SDGs). The development of women entrepreneurs in tourism contributes to achieving SDG 5 (Gender equality and women’s empowerment) and SDG 8 (Employment, decent work for all and social protection). This research seeks to give visibility to the links between sustainable entrepreneurship and gender. Islam and Sharma (2022) reinforce this idea, confirming that the study of gender in entrepreneurship is necessary to achieve the SDGs.

According to Barrachina et al. (2021), women entrepreneurs have stronger capabilities to lead sustainable business initiatives than men. They add that the

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link between women entrepreneurial initiatives and sustainability requires further study to support attempts to achieve the sustainable development of society, companies, and organizations.

Social inclusion, as defined by the World Bank Group, is “the process of improving the ability, opportunity, and dignity of those disadvantaged on the basis of their identity to take part in society.” According to the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN), the risk of social exclusion is greater for the unemployed, people with a low educational level, women, and members of minority ethnic groups such as immigrants or undocumented persons. In particular, less-educated women, who often face challenges to access the labor market and are constrained by patriarchal norms, embrace entrepreneurship to support their families economically (Ferdousi and Mahmud 2019).

The social inclusion of women entrepreneurs can be analyzed from two perspectives. The first is that of the role of women entrepreneurs within the local community, where the economy is linked to the social sphere (European Commission 2017). The second is that of the role of entrepreneurship as a key to the social inclusion of women. Social entrepreneurship is entrepreneurship with a combined social purpose (Choi and Majumdar 2014). This special issue aims to shed light on the role of women entrepreneurs in social entrepreneurship.

Despite the ongoing challenges in conceptualizing and measuring performance in social entrepreneurship, women entrepreneurs and their companies should individually or collectively be a focus for practitioners and researchers (Datta and Gailey 2012). Conceiving research as “entrepreneurship is social change” (Calás et al. 2009) means that the ultimate measure of women’s empowerment lies in their achievements due to their own choice of area in which to do business and social causes in which to invest (Louw et al. 2020).

Entrepreneurship researchers, public policymakers, and entrepreneurs are called upon to join together to understand the key problems facing society (Terjesen et al. 2016). One challenge is to be able to design research that can contribute to achieving innovative, sustainable, and inclusive growth. Such growth should be based on wealth distribution and fairer relationships beyond traditional economic models (Díaz-Foncella and Marcuello 2012). Ultimately, pertinent research results must be disseminated within the affected communities (Terjesen et al. 2016).

It is commonly accepted that the presence of women in management positions is better supported in certain economic sectors (Akehurst et al. 2012). Numerous authors (Akehurst et al. 2012; Yagil and Luria 2016) agree that women’s businesses are usually in the services sector. They particularly tend to lean toward activities where women have traditionally had a greater presence. Examples include retail, hospitality, personal care, and education (Huang et al. 2012; Mas-Tur et al. 2014).

Given this background, a special issue that focuses on how women entrepreneurs in services can help achieve social inclusion and enable new opportunities, not only for these women entrepreneurs themselves but also for the most disadvantaged, is especially important.

2 Contributions

The first contribution, “Training mom entrepreneurs in Pakistan: a replication model” by Qureshi, Welsh, and Khan, deals with the women entrepreneur mindset and its relationship with community, family, and individual life. The study introduces the Women Entrepreneurship Plus model (WE-PLUS). This model offers an alternative view of women’s entrepreneurship by creating a more detailed context of women entrepreneurship research outside the traditional model applied to male entrepreneurship. The WE-PLUS model provides a women-oriented framework that fits with new standards and that measures women’s contributions, also encouraging family orientation and nation-building.

Anggadwita, Ramadani, Permatasari, and Alamanda, authors of “Key determinants of women’s entrepreneurial intentions in encouraging social empowerment”, analyzed the relationship between women’s entrepreneurial intentions and (i) socio-cultural environment, (ii) social perceptions, and (iii) entrepreneurial orientation in SMEs in Indonesia. The results show that entrepreneurial orientation is related to women’s entrepreneurial intentions directly and indirectly under interaction with the other two main variables (socio-cultural environment and social perceptions). Thus, governments must consider entrepreneurial orientation to increase women’s entrepreneurial intentions.

The paper by AlEssa and Durugbo, “Understanding innovative work behavior of women in service firms”, proposes a new model encouraging innovative work behavior engagement of women in private service companies. The results show that management must encourage flow and fairness, enthusiasm and persistence, conscientiousness and innovation, energy and empowerment, collaboration, and potential, as well as flow and fairness, among women in the service sector to improve innovative work behavior. Additionally, management strategies are required to prevent prejudice, discomfort, shyness, and sensitivity.

“Strategic female transnational digital entrepreneurship on service platforms: a qualitative study of Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in New Zealand” by Duan examines strategic female transnational digital entrepreneurship (FTDE). By supplying knowledge, information, technology, markets, and financial capital, digital innovations promote FTDE. Without intermediaries, financial capital is immediately accessible to FTDEs. Additionally, platforms allow traditional necessity and opportunity entrepreneurs to engage in FTDE as they undergo digital transformation.

Tripathy, Paliwal, and Singh, authors of “Women’s social entrepreneurship and livelihood innovation—an exploratory study from India”, discuss the fact that social companies run by women have huge potential to guarantee sustainable livelihoods and empower women. By examining the connection between social entrepreneurship and community development and by placing a stronger emphasis on social enterprises created by women, this study adds value to the women entrepreneurship literature. An integrated model of entrepreneurship development among rural and marginal women is developed thanks to the breadth of banking and training services provided by Mann Deshi Bank and its Foundation.

The Mann Deshi model is a motivating example of a women-led social business strategy in a highly technical service industry, in this case banking and livelihood financing.

The article by Comeig, Jaramillo-Gutiérrez, and Ramírez, “Are credit screening contracts designed for men?”, deals with the limitation of access to credit and its fundamental role in women entrepreneurship. The study shows that when using this credit screening method, men and women make different decisions. The experiment shows that incentive-compatible contracts with collateral fail to disclose women’s private information, while disclosing men’s private information. To overcome the glass ceiling that prevents women from accessing loans, the authors suggest that banks take gender differences in risk attitudes into account.

In “Overcoming bias against funding of female-led entrepreneurial initiatives: the democratizing influence of online crowdlending platforms”, Singh, Segó, and Sarin deal with opportunities for social empowerment and financial security provided to women via women-led businesses and entrepreneurial endeavors. The authors examine how far online crowdlending platforms share the gender prejudice against women-led firms that is prevalent in traditional funding channels. Their results show that women entrepreneurs have a higher likelihood of getting funded faster than males do on online crowdlending platforms, in contrast to traditional funding sources and earlier research findings. One reason may be that on prosocial crowdlending platforms, lenders may be more aware of and sympathetic to the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs.

In “A Systematic Literature Review of Women in Social Entrepreneurship”, Jeong and Yoo perform a systematic literature review on social entrepreneurship, emphasizing on women social entrepreneurship. The authors highlight the importance of overcoming gender discrimination; current literature underlines the importance of women entrepreneurs in combating discrimination and promoting social integration. Moreover, Jeong and Yoo suggest focusing the attention on reinterpreting the existing theoretical concepts on social entrepreneurship.

The study by Sendra-Pons, Belarbi-Muñoz, Garzón, and Mas-Tur, “Cross-country differences in drivers of female necessity entrepreneurship”, examines the drivers of female necessity entrepreneurship using Global Entrepreneurship Monitor data. The results show that women entrepreneurs, especially those operating out of necessity, appear to possess a high degree of entrepreneurial skills and entrepreneurial intentions. These entrepreneurial skills could be further supported by policies in favor of women’s acquisition of a skills toolkit through government-supported training programs. Along the same lines, the results emphasize the importance of developing a culture that encourages entrepreneurial intentions.

According to Brush et al. (2009) promoting research on entrepreneurial initiatives will give politicians data and tools to develop a better understanding of women’s needs and implement support plans for women entrepreneurs. The importance of emphasizing the social and environmental impact of projects, as well as the differences between men and women, is highlighted in this special issue.

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