

THE IMPACT OF WORK EXPERIENCE ON SELECTED ENTREPRENEURIAL FACTORS

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Abstract: Entrepreneurship has been cited as a significant contributor to economic growth and development numerous times by academics, policymakers and other stakeholders. Furthermore, in recent years, much emphasis has been placed on female entrepreneurs' role within a community and the economy. Emerging economies, such as South Africa, sometimes rely on entrepreneurship even more as a source of employment. However, many businesses fail due to various reasons. One of these possible reasons could be a lack of prior work or business experience. Considering this, the objective of this study was to explore the difference in various entrepreneurial factors between South African female entrepreneurs and the number of years' experience they have as being self-employed. A quantitative descriptive research approach was followed. A total of 510 female entrepreneurs were asked to complete a self-administered questionnaire. Data were analysed using descriptive, reliability and validity statistics and a one-way ANOVA test. Findings indicated that, from the selected entrepreneurial factors, only internal motivation returned a statistically significant difference. Interestingly, females with more than three years of self-employment experience were motivated more by internal factors such as independence, work-life balance, pursuing a challenge, contributing to society, and family security. The results suggest that females who have been self-employed for longer may not have as much external motivation as those who have just started a new business.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial factors, female entrepreneurs; self-employment, South Africa, work experience.

DOI: 10.17512/pjms.2020.22.2.17

Article history:

Received August 29, 2020; *Revised* October 23, 2020; *Accepted* November 5, 2020

Introduction

Entrepreneurship has been coined as one of the main contributing factors towards a healthy economy (Kot *et al.*, 2016; Oláh *et al.*, 2018; Schachtebeck *et al.*, 2019; Onalan & Magda, 2020; Šebestová & Sroka, 2020). Unfortunately, even though this is a well-known fact, entrepreneurship has not been developed to its full potential in many countries. Considering this, research in this field and the broader business management field, especially in areas with growth potential such as female and family entrepreneurship, could be valuable. Researchers such as Gatewood *et al.* (2009), Ahl (2006) and De Mel *et al.* (2014) have emphasised the importance of improving the understanding of female entrepreneurs regarding their

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particularities and their unique contribution towards the business world. While some researchers might believe that entrepreneurial aspects remain similar across genders, many propose that several noticeable differences between male and female entrepreneurial concepts exist (Ahl, 2006). This sparked the interest of female entrepreneurship research in recent years.

Over the decades, several definitions explaining the term entrepreneurship has been developed. As the concept itself is rather multidimensional, one would understand that there is no 'one-size fits all' definition. Bula (2012) opine that it can be defined by and viewed from, for example, an economic, managerial, psychological, or social perspective. One of the first definitions by Cantillon (1755) defined an entrepreneur as an individual who is ultimately responsible for exchange and movement within the economy (Brown & Thornton, 2013). Other well-known economists such as Jean-Baptiste Say and Schumpeter defined an entrepreneur as a manager who considered an economic production unit, using sound judgment to take risks or create new combinations of products and services (De Bruin *et al.*, 2006). More recent definitions include those of Kirzner (1973) and Shane (2003), who contend that an entrepreneur is a person who is alert to obscure opportunities and who possesses the skill to exploit these opportunities by creating new business ventures by identifying such in a timeous manner. Although not one of these definitions is precisely the same, the following key concepts are contained in most of them: opportunism, innovation, risk-taking, new designs, improved combinations of processes and the creation of new and improved business models. Various external and internal factors can contribute to entrepreneurship's success, and these may directly lead to some of the aforementioned vital concepts. Meyer and Meyer (2016) opine that external aspects such as partnership formation, local leadership, infrastructure capacity, access to opportunities, policy stability and a safe environment all lead to an enabling setting for business development.

On the other hand, aspects such as fear of failure, leadership and previous work or business experience may be considered internal factors contributing to business success. Authors such as Lerner *et al.* (1997) and Fairlie and Robb (2008) have specifically identified an entrepreneur's previous work experience as a positive determinant of business success. Considering this, the objective of this study was to explore the difference in various entrepreneurial factors between South African female entrepreneurs and the number of years' experience they have as being self-employed.

Literature Review

Certain external events or conditions may influence several entrepreneurial factors. These factors include business growth factors and attitude towards the business, intention to grow the business, intention to remain in business, entrepreneurship training and education and internal and external motivation. These are briefly discussed next.

Entrepreneurial factors

Motivation to engage in and begin new business ventures has been a key topic in entrepreneurial research within recent years and to which a substantial amount of interest and attention has been dedicated (Hessels *et al.*, 2008; Benzing *et al.*, 2009; Gabrielsson & Politis, 2011). What was found is that motivation to begin a business is closely linked with what keeps people in business for prolonged periods of time. Motivation has in turn been deconstructed into several factors or reasons. These underlying reasons are what influences and drives the potential entrepreneur's decision to start or remain in business. Whilst there are similarities between male and female entrepreneurs there are distinct differences that are born out of gender. One observation, by Dawson and Henley (2012), indicates that female entrepreneurs are more likely to be motivated by the option of having flexible working hours when deciding to follow an entrepreneurial career path. This contrasts with male entrepreneurs in most cases. Moreover, females tend to start businesses from internal drive and foci of motivation as opposed to the general external foci predominant in males. For example, greater work-life balance, community contributions, and time flexibility are notable internal motivating factors amongst female entrepreneurs. In contrast, an external drive refers to concepts that are significantly rooted in outcomes such as the accrual of financial wealth or amplification of the authority held (Rasego, 2011).

Traditionally, there is a shortcoming in research regarding entrepreneurial intention to remain in and grow the business. Krueger and Carsrud (1993) suggest that exogenous factors may affect the individual's intention and attitude, namely: demographics, traits, government support, and policy. Individual characteristics and personal motivation directly contribute to intention and attitude (Davidsson, 1995).

Entrepreneurial training and education have focused on the design and development of entrepreneurial programmes and have been found to contribute to entrepreneurial success (Onstenk, 2003). What is consistent throughout the literature is the emphasis on the early introduction of entrepreneurial education in curricula. Kuratko (2005) and Nabi *et al.* (2018) opine that this can be done as early as primary school level thus emphasising the importance of entrepreneurship at a young age.

The reason for this emphasis on education at an earlier age is based on the work of Kolvereid and Moen (1997) who state that individual values and personality are developed through early-life experiences of which formal education forms a large part in modern economic and social systems. It has been shown that characteristics such as autonomy, creativity and independence can more easily be developed early in life and may contribute to the decision to partake in entrepreneurial activities later on in life. Having entrepreneurial subjects while completing tertiary education or being part of an entrepreneurial training programme has been shown to stimulate

entrepreneurial intent and, in due course, new business development (Kolvereid & Moen, 1997; Lorz *et al.*, 2013).

However, the establishment of new enterprises is not the only metric through which entrepreneurial intervention is measured. Business growth, as noted by multiple studies, is another critical indicator of entrepreneurial and business success and is measured by financial performance or growth factors such as an increase in the number of employees (Ming-Yen & Siong-Choy, 2007; Manolova *et al.*, 2012). The last of the entrepreneurial factors included in this study is attitude. Attitude can conceptually be defined as the internal valuation of a situation, thought, or object as being either good, bad, or an obscure combination of the two (Wiklund *et al.*, 2003). Research on entrepreneurial behaviour has been emphasised strongly from a historical perspective, with the primary focus on personality variables, such as the need for achievement and locus of control (Stimpson *et al.*, 1990; Wiklund *et al.*, 2003). Where research on entrepreneurial behaviour has fallen short, however, is the effect of attitude (Stimpson *et al.*, 1990; Wiklund *et al.*, 2003). Attitude may be considered an essential determinant of behaviour, as it has been shown to be a specific determinant of one's feelings and valuation over a particular situation. According to Kim and Hunter (1993), attitude can be considered a strong predictor of behaviour, particularly behaviour linked to achieving goals. Business growth is linked strongly to external motivation and consequently a relationship can be established between motivation, attitude and growth (Delmar & Wiklund, 2008). Although this study only included the seven aforementioned entrepreneurial factors, many factors affect and impact entrepreneurial behaviour. As previously mentioned, various external and internal aspects may have an impact on the identified entrepreneurial actors. For example, Meyer and Meyer (2016) lists some external aspects such as local leadership, infrastructure capacity, access to opportunities and policy stability. Aspects such as fear of failure, leadership and previous work or business experience may be considered internal factors contributing to business success. The following section will address the importance of work and business experience as a possible contributor to business success.

Importance of previous work or self-employment experience

Lerner *et al.* (1997) and Fairlie and Robb (2008) believe that the owner's previous work experience was a positive determinant of business success and may influence the mentioned entrepreneurial factors. Results indicated that previous work experience in a similar industry or the number of years self-employed therein, may significantly impact business performance of new start-ups. Research by Osterman (1995) and Bishop (1996) indicated that any work experience may assist in the labour force development and contribute to the economic success of the individual. Work experience benefit individuals, employees and business owners by enhancing personal development, soft skills, and self-discovery. Soft skills are universally essential and work experience equips an individual with many of these essential

skills such as teamwork, clear communication, the development of systems and processes, presentation skills (Holzherr, 2013). Holzherr (2013) expands on soft-skills development with particular reference to self-discovery, stating that work experience, especially that which is acquired at younger ages, through a multiplicity of jobs and positions, educates the individual about their preferences amongst variety of different career options in different sectors. Self-discovery in turn, benefits the future entrepreneur by providing them with clear preferences and an understanding of their inherent strengths and weaknesses within the various industries they have experience in. In addition to these common advantages of work experience, some more complex advantages may prevail. Experience creates critical thinkers and leaders and help the individual deal with work-related stress and strain in a better manner (Dragoni *et al.*, 2014; Verhofstadt *et al.*, 2017). Aldrich *et al.* (1989) stress the importance of work experience as a platform for networking on personal, professional, and social levels, which is an essential component of entrepreneurial success. Contemporary studies have shown that the number of years as a self-employed individual may have an effect on entrepreneurial activity. In light of the aforementioned discussion, the following hypotheses were formulated in respect to contemporary literature to determine if any significant differences were present in the entrepreneurial factors between South African female entrepreneurs who had been self-employed for three years or less and those who had been self-employed for more than three years. The hypotheses are set out here:

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in internal motivation.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in external motivation.

H₀₃: There is no significant difference in the intention to remain in business.

H₀₄: There is no significant difference in the intention to grow the business.

H₀₅: There is no significant difference in entrepreneurship training and education.

H₀₆: There is no significant difference in business growth factors.

H₀₇: There is no significant difference in attitude towards the business.

Methodology

Design and sample

Considering the study's empirical nature and its objectives, the underlying philosophical underpinning flowed from the positivist paradigm as the data obtained was objectively interpreted in a statistical manner (Howlett *et al.*, 2009). A quantitative research approach using a cross-sectional, descriptive design was followed. Initially, 600 questionnaires were distributed and a total of 510 female entrepreneurs representing all nine South African provinces made up the final sample. This sample was drawn using a non-probability convenience sampling method and self-administered questionnaires were used to gather the required primary data.

Research instrument and data analysis

The research instrument used was a self-designed questionnaire, including general demographic and business information and several entrepreneurial related factors. Some factors originated from existing scales and others were developed based on an extensive review of the literature. The questionnaire was pre-tested by industry experts and piloted on a sample of female entrepreneurs from Namibia. Responses were measured using a combination of nominal and six-point Likert-scaled questions and statements ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (6) strongly agree. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 25.0) was used to analyse the data. Descriptive (means and standard deviations) and reliability (Cronbach alpha) analysis was used, followed by a one-way ANOVA to test for a significant difference in internal (H_01) and external motivation (H_02), intention to remain in business (H_03), intention to grow the business (H_04), entrepreneurship training and education (H_05), business growth factors (H_06) and attitude towards the business (H_07) between South African female entrepreneurs who had been self-employed for three years or less and those who had been self-employed for more than three years.

Results and discussion

Based on the final sample (N=510), an 85% response rate was reported. The sample was representative of the greater South Africa (World Population Review, 2019) with 72% of the females from black African origin, 16% white, 9% coloureds (9%) and Asian/Indian only 3%. The sample comprised 37% of females aged between 21 and 30 years and 34% between 41 to 50 years. The rest of the sample made up the age groups younger than 21 or older than 50 years. The respondents were asked how long they have been self-employed, thus linking to business/work experience and grouped into those with less than three years' experience (Group 1) and those with more than three years' experience. As disclosed in the literature review section, previous business experience, and specifically as a business owner, may be a contributing factor towards business success (Lerner *et al.*, 1997; Fairlie & Robb, 2008). The descriptive and reliability statistics for the sample are included in Table 1.

Brinkman (2009) explains that cross-sectional studies' reliability and validity are vital to the results' trustworthiness. Initially, the pilot study returned acceptable reliability and the questionnaire was deemed fit for further data collection. Table 1 contains the reliability results.

Table 1. Reliability results

Entrepreneurial Factor	Number of items	Cronbach alpha	Average inter-item correlation
Internal motivation	14	0.750	0.179
External motivation	7	0.725	0.260
Intention to remain in business	5	0.731	0.372
Intention to grow business	3	0.768	0.524
Training and education	5	0.730	0.355
Business growth factors	17	0.788	0.195
Attitude towards business	14	0.819	0.248

All the factors returned a satisfactory Cronbach alpha of above 0.7 (Nunnally, 1978). Construct validity was measured using the average inter-item correlation. All factors returned values falling within Clark and Watson's (1995) recommended levels of 0.15 to 0.50, with the intention to grow business factor only slightly higher. It was thus reasonable to assume that the items' convergent and discriminant validity within the factors were present.

The descriptive analysis is portrayed in Table 2 and included the means, standard deviations, skewness values and kurtosis values of the various factors. As mentioned, responses used a Likert scale, allowing a range of between 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree); thus, higher means represented a more favorable opinion from the respondents based on the specific statement.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics summary for factors

Entrepreneurial factor	Mean statistic	Standard deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Internal motivation	5.067	0.509	-0.660	2.422
External motivation	4.867	0.724	-1.054	1.865
Intention to remain in business	5.071	0.757	-1.809	5.189
Intention to grow business	5.170	0.815	-1.764	3.772
Training and education	4.754	0.827	-1.201	1.597
Business growth factors	4.882	0.564	-1.727	5.909
Attitude towards business	4.959	0.603	-0.970	2.635

Data may be considered normally distributed as the skewness statistics for the seven factors all measured between -2 and +2. All calculated means showed that respondents agreed strongly with each factor as they were all above 3.5. Overall the results show that female entrepreneurs intend to remain in business ($\bar{x} = 5.071$) and grow their business ($\bar{x} = 5.170$) and that they have a positive attitude towards their business ($\bar{x} = 4.959$). Authors such as Kozan *et al.* (2012) and Arthur-Aidoo *et al.* (2016) mention that an entrepreneur's attitude towards their business strongly correlates to intention to grow the business and could lead to more extended

periods of remaining in business. Furthermore, the findings suggest that female entrepreneurs are both internally ($\bar{x} = 5.067$) and externally motivated ($\bar{x} = 4.867$) and believe that entrepreneurship training ($\bar{x} = 4.754$) and sound business growth practices ($\bar{x} = 4.882$) are relevant to overall business success.

One of the external factors affecting businesses' success rate and possibly influencing the said entrepreneurial factors may be previous work experience or experience as an entrepreneur or business owner (Philip, 2010). Philip (2010) refers to this as the 'know-how' of an entrepreneur. Data indicated that most of the sample consisted of relatively new entrepreneurs: 15.3% had been self-employed for a year or less; 46.9% had been self-employed for between one and three years; and 35.1% were self-employed for more than three years. Of the 172 respondents who indicated that they had been self-employed for more than three years, more than 88% had been self-employed for four to ten years; 9.3% had been self-employed 16 to 25 years and 2.91% for more than 26 years. One of the participants had been self-employed for 40 years.

The following analysis tested for differences between the female entrepreneurs' number of years of being self-employed and the numerous factors set out in H₀1-H₀7.

Table 3. ANOVA results for differences between variables and number of years being self-employed

Variable	0 to 3 years	More than three years	P	η^2
Internal motivation	5.014	5.152	0.004*	0.017
External motivation	4.895	4.793	0.135	0.005
Intention to remain in business	5.056	5.093	0.601	0.001
Intention to grow the business	5.213	5.078	0.077	0.006
Entrepreneurship training and education	4.743	4.751	0.916	0.000
Business growth factors	4.896	4.835	0.253	0.003
Attitude towards the business	4.913	5.016	0.065	0.007

*Statistically significant difference: $p < 0.05$

Table 3 represents the results from the one-way between-groups ANOVA conducted to explore the differences in the factors between different groups of South African female entrepreneurs' number of years being self-employed. The only statistically significant difference reported amongst the groups was the internal motivation variable ($p = 0.004$). Female entrepreneurs with less than three years of self-employment experience presented a lower mean ($\bar{x} = 5.014$) than those with more than three years of self-employment experience ($\bar{x} = 5.152$). The effect of this significant difference between the two groups was small ($\eta^2 > 0.01 < 0.09$).

Interestingly, females with more than three years of self-employment experience were motivated more by internal factors such as independence, work-life balance,

pursuing a challenge, contributing to society, and family security. This suggests that females who have been self-employed for longer may not have as much external motivation: the desire for wealth, applying skills and knowledge, proving oneself and improving one's status, compared to females who have just started a new business. Once again, females who have owned a business for longer may be older and more likely to be internally motivated. Block and Sandner (2009) suggest that non-monetary benefits, such as those included in the internal motivation factor, play an essential role in entrepreneurial activity. People with more extended self-employment experience may be more inclined to these benefits. Given their experience and qualification level, some entrepreneurs may earn more if employed in a full-time job but prefer to be self-employed. It seems to be that money is only part of what matters (Hamilton, 2000). This may be even more so in females who may value aspects, such as work-life balance and contribute to society, more highly. For many entrepreneurs, increased value is obtained from independence, broader skill application, and the possibility of following their ideas (Hundley, 2001; Frey & Benz, 2008). Some empirical evidence exists that self-employed individuals may be more satisfied with their jobs than paid employees (for example, Blanchflower, 2000; Frey & Benz, 2008).

Therefore, in the case of external motivation (H_02), intention to remain in business (H_03), intention to grow the business (H_04), entrepreneurship training and education (H_05), business growth factors (H_06) and attitude towards the business (H_07) there is insufficient evidence to reject the null hypotheses. However, concerning the internal motivation factor, H_01 is rejected and the alternative is accepted as a statistically significant difference was observed between the two groups.

Conclusion

Entrepreneurship has been a topic of discussion for many years and has been on the agenda of many policymakers and government institutions. It creates new employment but other aspects such as innovation and social impact are also improved through entrepreneurship. In addition, female entrepreneurs have enjoyed increased attention, with more and more females entering the business world very successfully. However, research on female entrepreneurial related topics is still scant, especially in emerging and developing countries. The objective of this study was to explore the difference in various entrepreneurial factors between South African female entrepreneurs and the number of years' experience they have as being self-employed. Several studies revealed the importance of previous work and business experience and its effect on certain entrepreneurial factors.

Interestingly, this study shows that only the internal motivation factor returned a statistically significant difference between the groups with less and those with more than three years of self-employment experience. Females with more than three years of self-employment experience were motivated more by internal factors

such as independence, work-life balance, pursuing a challenge, contributing to society, and family security. This suggests that females who have been self-employed for longer may not have as much external motivation as females who have just started a new business.

Although this study contributed to the existing body of knowledge in providing insights on female entrepreneurs in a developing country setting, it is not without limitations. The main limitation is the one country sample and adding more countries, or comparing countries could add another dimension to the findings. As the study merely included descriptive analysis, further studies using more robust statistical analysis to test for associations and predictions could be beneficial. Additional future research could include longitudinal studies to determine how female entrepreneurs perceive and experience certain factors over time and as their businesses progress through the various stages of the business cycle. General recommendations to improve female entrepreneurial development may include the governments and other stakeholders, highlighting the importance of entrepreneurship and the recent impact females have made in the field. In addition, the creation of female entrepreneurial development programmes, training, and funding opportunities is crucial to many micro and small businesses' long-term success.

Acknowledgments

The author would like to acknowledge the Department of Higher Education and Training - National Research Foundation, South African Research Chair Initiative (DHET-NRF SARChI) in Entrepreneurship Education for the contribution to some of the costs of the publication of this manuscript.

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CZY PRACOWNICY PUBLICZNI W HISZPANII CZY SĄ SZCZĘŚLIWI W SWOJEJ PRACY W ERA PRZEMYSŁU 4.0?

Streszczenie: Liczne badania w literaturze wskazują na związek między czynnikami społeczno-psychologicznymi w pracy a stopniem satysfakcji lub postrzeganego szczęścia. Jednak nadal istnieje niewiele analiz, które wyraźnie odnoszą się do tej relacji w przypadku pracowników sektora publicznego w porównaniu z pracownikami sektora prywatnego. Celem tego artykułu jest ustalenie, czy pracownicy sektora publicznego są szczęśliwsi niż

sektor prywatny, łącząc szczęście z niektórymi z tych czynników w Hiszpanii. Wyniki pokazują, że pracownicy sektora publicznego są rzeczywiście szczęśliwsi niż ci w sektorze prywatnym. Jeśli chodzi o płace, bezpieczeństwo i odczuwalny poziom stresu, istnieją powiązania ze szczęściem pracowników. Badanie to dostarcza bardzo przydatnych informacji dla menedżerów firm, którzy są odpowiedzialni za politykę kadrową związaną z tymi czynnikami: wynagrodzeniem, bezpieczeństwem i stresem.

Słowa kluczowe: szczęście, satysfakcja, zasoby ludzkie, polityka kadrowa, Przemysł 4.0, sektor publiczny, sektor prywatny.

西班牙公众员工在工业4.0时代的工作绩效是否更高？

摘要: 文献中的一些研究表明,工作中的社会心理因素与满意度或感知的幸福感之间存在联系。但是,与私营部门相比,很少有分析能够明确解决这种关系。本文旨在通过将幸福与西班牙的某些因素相关联,找出公共部门雇员是否比私营部门更快乐。结果表明,公共部门的雇员确实比私人部门的雇员快乐。在薪酬,安全性和可感知的压力水平方面,与员工幸福感之间存在关联关系。这项研究为那些负责与以下因素相关的人力资源政策的公司经理提供了非常有用的信息:工资,安全性和压力。

关键字: 幸福, 满意度, 人力资源, 人力资源政策, 工业4.0, 公共部门, 私营部门。