



Sociocultural Challenges For Women Entrepreneurs In Algerian Society

Dr. Hakima Tagadla Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi Ouzou, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences - Tamda (Algeria). Email Author: taghakima@gmail.com

Received: 06/2023

Published: 12/2023

Abstract:

Women entrepreneurs in Algeria face significant socio-cultural challenges that hinder their growth in the field of entrepreneurship. The existing social values and traditions in Algerian society are a major obstacle, as they impose certain restrictions on women's role in the workforce and consider it a violation of cultural norms. These challenges also include difficulties in accessing funding and financial support for women's start-up projects, as well as a lack of technical support and training needed to develop their skills and capabilities in business management. In addition, legal regulations and laws, which can sometimes be restrictive or discriminatory against women, act as an additional barrier to the stability and development of their entrepreneurial ventures. This article discusses the definition of women entrepreneurs, the importance of women entrepreneurs in achieving economic and social development, the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs and the characteristics that women entrepreneurs should possess.

Keywords: Socio-cultural challenges, entrepreneurship, women entrepreneurs.

Introduction:

Women entrepreneurs in Algerian society are seen as symbols of creativity and excellence, striving to succeed and excel in the business world despite the many socio-cultural challenges they face. Setting up a business or private enterprise is a bold and significant step for them, but they face a number of obstacles stemming from customs, traditions and societal expectations.

In traditional Algerian society, which tends to endorse certain gender roles, women entrepreneurs face significant challenges. The expectations associated with traditional social roles can hinder their progress, as women are sometimes assumed to have pre-defined roles within the family, making it difficult for them to manage their time and dedicate themselves to their business ventures.

In addition, women entrepreneurs may face challenges in obtaining the necessary funding and support to develop their projects due to reservations or limited perceptions of their entrepreneurial abilities.

However, Algerian women entrepreneurs show an unparalleled determination to achieve their goals, demonstrating their efficiency and capacity for innovation and management excellence. They serve as symbols of change and development within society.

Given the socio-cultural challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in Algerian society, it is essential to support and encourage them in order to empower and motivate them to realise their full potential and contribute effectively to economic growth and social development. Therefore, this article will attempt to explore who the female entrepreneur is, the main theories that have focused on feminist entrepreneurship, the importance of female entrepreneurship in achieving economic and social development, the main challenges faced by female entrepreneurs, and the essential characteristics that female entrepreneurs should possess.

1- Definition of women entrepreneurs:

A woman entrepreneur is an individual who, either alone or with one or more partners, establishes, buys or inherits an enterprise and assumes its financial, administrative and social responsibilities. She independently manages a commercial or industrial activity and is involved in its day-to-day operations (Alaa El-Din, 2004, p. 98). She is a woman who builds and develops her own business through innovation and profitability, regardless of the size and scope of her work. Women entrepreneurs are considered to be fundamental pillars of the economy and development of societies, as they contribute to the creation of new employment opportunities and the strengthening of the local economy. Women entrepreneurs are typically characterised by creativity, courage and adaptability. They are able to succeed in a wide range of fields and industries. Women entrepreneurs are involved in a wide variety of activities that span different sectors such as trade, industry, construction, handicrafts, media and marketing, technology, tourism, management, consulting and many others. Being a woman entrepreneur requires the necessary skills to effectively manage the day-to-day operations of the business, including planning, organising, directing, controlling, hiring staff and developing marketing and sales strategies. However, women entrepreneurs face many challenges and difficulties in running their businesses, including access to finance, competition and balancing personal and professional life. Therefore, providing appropriate support, guidance and opportunities to women entrepreneurs is crucial to help them achieve success and sustainability in their business endeavours (Rokia Hassani, Rabah Khouni, 2015, p. 126).

2- The main theories related to women's entrepreneurship:

1. Social feminist theory: it encompasses a set of intellectual and philosophical frameworks that seek to understand the roots and causes of gender disparities with the aim of improving women's conditions and increasing their opportunities in all fields (Hind Mahmoudi, Shima El-Tantawy, 2016, p.13). This theory interprets women's work through three main approaches:

1.1. Women in development approach: This approach emerged in the 1970s as a result of the absence of women in development theory and practice. It found that development programmes and projects overlooked women's contribution to social and economic life. The aim of this approach is to involve women in development processes, and it uses various strategies, including strengthening women's capacity to manage family affairs and improving and expanding the scope of women's productive roles. Several conferences and declarations have supported the empowerment of women and the elimination of discrimination against women, such as the First United Nations World Conference on Women in 1974, the Declaration of the Decade for Women in 1975 and the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1997.

1.2. Women and development approach: This approach emerged in the late 1970s and focuses on the relationship between women and the development process. It argues that women are already involved in the development process. This approach emphasises the satisfaction of women's basic needs and recognises their potential contributions to development. According to this approach, development processes are more effective when women's efforts are valued.

1.3. Gender in development approach: This approach emerged in the 1980s and early 1990s with the aim of promoting women's development and integrating women into all aspects of life. It coincided with the recognition of the underlying reasons for women's continued subordinate role in society. This approach aims to address gender inequalities and empower women in various spheres of life (Bahri Dalal, p. 77).

Indeed, women's liberation movements have emerged in response to social injustices and the prioritisation of men over women in social distribution. These movements have called for changes in the status of women, and their goals include

1- Demand for gender equality: Women's liberation movements have campaigned for equal rights and opportunities between the sexes. They seek to eliminate discrimination and inequalities based on gender.

2- Women's participation in decision-making: These movements have fought for the inclusion and active participation of women in decision-making processes at all levels, whether in politics, organisations or communities.

3- Women's right to work and hold high positions: Women's liberation movements have sought to break down barriers that restrict women's access to employment and leadership positions. They advocate equal opportunities for women in the workforce and the elimination of gender discrimination in career advancement.

4- Women's right to fair pay: These movements have called for equal pay for equal work, highlighting the importance of closing the gender pay gap and ensuring that women receive fair compensation for their work.

The modern liberation revolutions have also played an important role in establishing human rights and eliminating perspectives and theories that advocated gender inequality. The advancement of democracy requires that women enjoy their full rights in order to contribute in their natural roles and assume their responsibilities in the political, social, economic and cultural fields (Saleh bin Hamad Al-Osaf, 1986, p.11).

2. Modern economic theory: The Industrial Revolution brought about several changes in society, as mentioned above. It was the most important factor in pushing women into the workforce, and it even forced men, who had previously opposed it, to support women and share responsibilities. This period had different effects on bourgeois women, who only worked in selected high-status professions according to their preferences, and on proletarian women, who experienced harsh exploitation and took on difficult and menial jobs out of necessity. The latter group often worked in factories, mines and other labour-intensive industries for very low wages.

This social change affected the nature of relationships within society.

There was an increased need for wealth, especially material wealth such as money and bank deposits. These resources were then transferred to large corporations who needed these funds to invest in industries such as textile manufacturing, railways, tunnels and others. Before that, the economy was based mainly on agriculture, which required land and mainly manual labour. (Hasni Farouk Al-Zaghibi, 2018). During this period, women were not able to choose jobs based on their preferences due to the circumstances they faced. They often worked out of necessity in exchange for a certain wage. Their motivations were not personal, such as self-affirmation or equality with men. This was due to the consequences of the Industrial Revolution and the transition from an agrarian economy to a technologically advanced economy dependent on machinery and technology. Society also experienced the effects of war during this period, which led to the majority of women entering the workforce in factories, mines and other industries. This step towards women's emancipation led to economic growth that prevented discrimination against women. Equality became a driving force for the Industrial Revolution, and the legislation that gave married women property rights became a cornerstone of this revolution, along with the development of other legislation that demanded women's rights and the fulfilment of their demands. Proponents of this theory argue that the role of women in social development is linked to the nature of the prevailing social structure and the changes that occur as a result of modernisation, education, stimulation and accompanying social and cultural innovations, all of which lead to increased opportunities for women in various fields of work (Sayyid Abdul Fattah Afifi, 1996, p. 32).

The modern liberation revolutions have played a significant role in defining human rights and eliminating perspectives and theories that advocated inequality between women and men. Democratic development now requires that women enjoy their full rights so that they can contribute to their natural role and assume their responsibilities in the political,

social, economic and cultural spheres. Despite the demands and movements of this theory, it has not been widely accepted in either Western or Arab societies. Although it studies societies, it has not been considered a recognised social science, which has led to a re-evaluation of this theory and a focus on defining social roles based on gender. The structure of society does not allow for equality between women and men, especially in traditional societies where work is divided according to gender, following patriarchal norms and male dominance.

3. Gender and development theory: This theory focuses on the integration of women into development processes. It emerged during the United Nations Decade for Women, which ran from 1976 to 1985. Its aim is to lay the foundations for justice and equality between women and men in the development process. It does this by seeking to develop women's reproductive, family, productive and political roles and by responding to women's strategic needs. It encourages countries to enact laws that improve the status of women in society, better support women's rights and bridge the gap between women and men.

This approach is based on the assumption that women are completely absent from the thinking of development planners and that integrating women into development activities that affect the whole population can make these activities more feasible and effective.

It focuses on women's productive roles and suggests that projects should target women directly in order to enable them to perform their traditional roles more effectively. This approach is based on the primary principle that women are already involved in the development process, but in unequal ways.

The Women and Development approach is based primarily on the belief that the development process will be better and more effective if women's efforts are recognised both inside and outside the home. However, in general, and particularly in Arab countries such as Algeria, women are still far from integrating the concept of gender into the development field, institutions and other areas. Proponents of this theory argue that women themselves are partly responsible for this situation, as they do not aspire to positions of power and higher positions, influenced by a social upbringing that differentiates between men and women, and the conservative culture of Arab society that views women as inferior to men. This socialisation is deeply ingrained in girls' minds and unconsciously helps to perpetuate it by shaping the upbringing of future generations.

4. The role of women entrepreneurs in achieving economic and social development:

Women entrepreneurs play a crucial role in achieving economic and social development in Algeria. The following are some of the key importance of women entrepreneurs in Algeria:

1. Economic development: Women entrepreneurs are a source of job creation and promote economic growth in the country. Through their initiative and investment, they contribute to broadening the economic base and creating more employment opportunities for both women and men.

2. Gender equality: By engaging in entrepreneurial activities, women contribute to achieving gender equality and increase their active participation in economic and social life in general. Women entrepreneurs also serve as role models, inspiring other women to pursue their aspirations, work towards financial independence and contribute to development.

3. Community development: Women entrepreneurs can play an important role in the development of local communities by initiating and developing projects that meet community needs and contribute to improving the social and economic well-being of people in the surrounding areas.

4. Economic diversification: The presence of more women entrepreneurs in Algeria promotes economic diversification and reduces dependence on other sectors. This will contribute to sustainable development and increase economic resilience in the face of changing economic challenges.

5. Innovation and creativity: Women entrepreneurs are drivers of change and innovation in the economy. Through their entrepreneurial activities, women develop new ideas or solutions to specific problems, thereby promoting innovation and a knowledge-based economy in the country.

In conclusion, women entrepreneurs play a crucial role in achieving economic and social development in Algeria by creating jobs, promoting gender equality, fostering community development, promoting economic diversification and encouraging innovation and creativity.

5.Challenges faced by women entrepreneurs:

Women entrepreneurs face several challenges, which may differ across cultures and societies. Some of these challenges are:

5-1 Expected social roles of women:

- Many Algerian societies do not recognise the role of women as entrepreneurs, preferring women to be in their traditional roles as wives and mothers.
- The social pressure on women to be responsible for household chores and raising children makes it difficult for them to balance family and work life (Mustafa, 2013, p.146).

5-2 Lack of community support:

- Algerian society lacks a culture that supports and encourages women entrepreneurs to achieve their dreams and goals.

- Gender discrimination and bias can lead to limited opportunities for funding and training for women entrepreneurs.

5-3 Cultural challenges:

- Women entrepreneurs face cultural challenges in Algerian society, such as deeply rooted traditions and customs.

- Negative reactions from society or family towards women who choose self-employment can prevent them from achieving their goals.

5-4 Difficulties in accessing public markets:

- Women entrepreneurs in Algerian society face challenges in accessing public markets and international trade due to legal and bureaucratic restrictions.

- The lack of professional networks and connections hinders the expansion of the presence of women entrepreneurs in the Algerian market and beyond.

These challenges are not fixed rules, as many women overcome these difficulties and succeed in building and managing their businesses. Increased awareness, societal support and policy changes can help reduce these challenges and further empower women entrepreneurs.

6- The characteristics that should be present in the female entrepreneur:

The female entrepreneur is defined as the woman who organises, owns, manages and bears the risks of her own project. She must therefore possess qualities and characteristics that enable her to manage her business successfully. The most important of these characteristics are:

6-1 Social characteristics:

- A supportive family environment that encourages entrepreneurship.

- Ability to effectively balance personal life and business responsibilities.

- Strong interpersonal skills: A woman entrepreneur should be able to identify the strengths of each team member and use them to motivate and guide them towards the goals of the business. Internally, she should be able to coordinate with suppliers, customers and the surrounding community, which means she must have effective communication skills to engage, persuade and lead them towards the success of the business.

6-2 Personal attributes:

- The ability to achieve success: Optimism based on realistic foundations is essential.
- Initiative: An entrepreneur should actively seek out new opportunities and bring unique contributions to her work.
- Excellence and competence in the field of work: It is important for a woman entrepreneur to have confidence in her skills and expertise. Having sufficient knowledge and understanding of the industry in which she operates is crucial to the success of her business.
- Risk appetite: A reasonable risk appetite, based on well thought out foundations, is important. It may not be convincing to others, but it should be based on the entrepreneur's belief that her goals are reasonable, compelling and achievable. Often this investment is in an area that matches their knowledge, background and experience, leading to greater success.
- The ability to handle responsibility and the desire to acquire it: A woman entrepreneur should feel personally responsible for results and prefer to invest her resources in ways that serve her personal goals.
- Seizing opportunities: Women entrepreneurs should have a keen sense of identifying and capitalising on opportunities as they arise.

6-3 Organisational characteristics:

- Time Management and Control: The ability to manage and control time effectively is crucial for a woman entrepreneur.
- Organisational skills: In order to be successful, a woman entrepreneur must consider the match between her skills, the job specifications, the nature of the business and its appropriate requirements.

6-4 Mental attributes:

- Quick comprehension and understanding: As the owner of the business, a woman entrepreneur is responsible for developing competitive plans for her business. She is the source of new ideas, which requires a strong ability to see the project from a high level perspective. While excellence in work helps her to understand how to carry out specific activities, her mental and intellectual capacity helps her to link activities and functions within the business unit.

6-5 Educational characteristics:

- An acceptable level of education: Illiteracy is a significant barrier to achieving goals and exposes women to exploitation.
- Ability to continue learning and acquire new skills needed in the ever-changing world of entrepreneurship.

- Ability to be a leader: Vision and the ability to inspire and lead others towards common goals.
- Creative thinking and the ability to propose innovative solutions to challenges and problems that may arise in their field of work.
- Flexibility and ability to adapt to rapidly changing markets and competitive environments.
- Effective communication skills and the ability to build strong networks that will help grow the business and increase opportunities for success.
- Good planning skills and effective time management, enabling her to achieve set goals and manage her business efficiently.
- Resilience and perseverance in the face of challenges and difficulties she may encounter in her entrepreneurial journey.
- Confidence in her abilities and skills, enabling her to make difficult decisions and deal with challenging situations with confidence.
- Ability to work in a team and motivate team members to achieve common goals.
- Analytical skills and the ability to make sound and informed decisions, enabling her to take the right steps in developing and managing her business.

Conclusion:

Women entrepreneurs in Algeria face many socio-cultural challenges that affect their entrepreneurial journey and require continuous efforts to overcome. Despite progress in gender equality, cultural and social factors still play a crucial role in shaping women's entrepreneurial experiences.

Values and societal expectations are among the most prominent challenges, as women entrepreneurs may face different valuations or challenges in gaining recognition or acceptance in their leadership roles. In addition, cultural and societal constraints can create barriers to accessing the necessary resources and networks for business development.

Furthermore, legal and bureaucratic challenges remain obstacles as women face difficulties in accessing the necessary funding and support to grow their businesses, limiting their opportunities for success and business growth.

However, Algeria is witnessing positive changes and increasing efforts to support women entrepreneurs through the launch of programmes and initiatives aimed at empowering them and providing them with the necessary support. Raising cultural awareness and education about women's role in society and the economy can help to reduce these

challenges and promote their position as key players in entrepreneurship and economic development.

On this basis, the social and cultural environment in which women live in society has an impact on the types of activities they engage in. The family environment directs women towards certain occupations and discourages them from others. Moreover, women entrepreneurs in Algerian society do not aspire to the highest positions, regardless of prevailing social perceptions. They are constantly bound by the collective conscience, which forces them to stay within the same social domain imposed by customs and traditions in order to maintain their traditional status, despite the fact that their roles and responsibilities in society have diversified.

In conclusion, there is no doubt that socio-cultural challenges are obstacles for women entrepreneurs in Algeria. However, the efforts made to promote equality and support women's entrepreneurship reflect a strong commitment to achieving positive and sustainable progress in this area.

Recommendations:

There are several recommendations that can be suggested to support women entrepreneurs in Algerian society to overcome socio-cultural challenges:

1. Raise awareness of the role of women in entrepreneurship and economic development through awareness campaigns, workshops and training programmes for women interested in starting their own businesses.
2. Establish supportive networks for women entrepreneurs that include sharing experiences, providing advice and guidance for beginners, and creating spaces for interaction and continuous learning.
3. Promote collaboration between government agencies, private organisations and academic institutions to provide comprehensive support programmes that promote women's entrepreneurship.
4. Promote women's participation in decision-making at governmental and economic levels and ensure their representation in consultative and decision-making structures.
5. Develop policies and programmes that promote gender equality in entrepreneurship and provide appropriate financial and technical support for women-led enterprises.
6. Promote an equal business culture and raise awareness of women's rights, empowerment and social inclusion.
7. Provide technical training and necessary skills in technology and innovation to help women develop their projects and increase their chances of success.

8. Highlight success stories of women entrepreneurs and use them as positive role models to inspire and motivate other women to invest in entrepreneurship.

These recommendations can help overcome socio-cultural barriers and enhance the role of women entrepreneurs in Algerian society.

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