

ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTION

Social Attitudes Towards Women Entrepreneurs in Algeria

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Abstract— Women entrepreneurs in Algeria, and in developing countries in general, are affected by the socio-cultural environment. Women are confronted with social attitudes as modelled by males who are comfortable with this cultural environment. Women are brought up in a male society, where we find discrimination between genders in roles, behaviours, occupations, and jobs. The main obstacle for women entrepreneurs in Algeria is that entrepreneurship was reserved for males, therefore, considered as a male's occupation. Social attitudes confirm this reality as jobs have a relationship with gender, and it is an adventure for women to engage in this occupational activity. To be entrepreneurs, women will have to face negative reactions and pressures from society: the family, the neighbours, men, and even females. Several people, including females, do not accept to work under the supervision of women. In order to shed light on this problem, a questionnaire was used for the collection of data, and filled in by a sample of 30 randomly chosen women entrepreneurs. Means and percentages of answers were computed. Social attitudes were found to be the source of constraints and cause problems for women entrepreneurs in Algeria.

Index Terms— Attitudes, Values, Women Entrepreneurs, Working Culture, Male Society

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Introduction

Until the end of the 20th century, entrepreneurship was considered as a male's occupation. The traditional idea of entrepreneurship has to do with building, and that means the need for physical efforts and strength. That can be carried out by men only.

The local culture led to the spread of attitudes pressing towards the respect of the cultural environment and practices. Any woman not respecting the cultural guidelines will be a subject of social pressures. That may result in negative attitudes and behaviours towards people behaving contrary to the habits and values prevailing in the society.

Literature about women entrepreneurs is more developed in Occident, where local environment affects little the gender roles, and culture has little impacts on women entrepreneurs. That is why no importance is given to the impacts of social attitudes on women entrepreneurs.

While in developing countries, especially in Arab Muslim cultures, such as Algeria, the local culture has an important role in the influence of women's behaviour, including women entrepreneurs. [Chamlou, Klapper, and Muzi \(2008\)](#) pointed out that "Attitudes about the value of work, working women, and gender equality affect women's economic participation and entrepreneurship everywhere, especially in the Middle East and North Africa, where optimism and attitudes toward working women are less positive than those in other regions" (p. 39).

That explains the importance of studying the impacts of social attitudes on women entrepreneurs in Algerian environment. Being an entrepreneur requires psychological characteristics, to be able to handle women and

men, in giving orders and having them executed. This may be contrary to the education imparted to women in Arab-Muslim environment. There is also evidence that women's behaviour is restricted by the values, customs, and cultural traditions which exert more pressure on working women. In this cultural environment, the women are often known for their sentimental qualities, and are easily influenced, therefore, cannot face the difficulties that are usually left to men ([Adora, 2017](#); [Ahl, 2006](#); [Salam, 2016](#)).

The same culture in different environments results in the same effect on women entrepreneurs. [Saber \(2002\)](#) concluded that "the negative attitude of society towards women entrepreneurs and social insecurity of women are traditional beliefs in Iranian society" ([Arasti, 2008](#)). The reality of women entrepreneurs in Algeria is not different from those in Morocco or Tunisia, as a result of cultural similarity, economic conditions, and geographical proximity of the three countries.

[Salman, El Abboubi, and Henda \(2012\)](#), pointed out that "Moroccan women, even educated, encounter obstacles to engaging in any activity outside home". They concluded that "if the situation of Moroccan women has dramatically changed, attitudes and perceptions of society have not evolved enough" ([Salman et al., 2012](#)).

Algerian women are open to socio-cultural changes as a result of their proximity with Europe, and sharing the values of Mediterranean civilisation. That is why the social culture and attitudes towards women, in marginal position, where Muslim women are frequently perceived as objects of pity often holding marginal and counterproductive statuses in their societies ([Naqshbandi & Kamel, 2017](#); [Osowska, Kapasi, & Jackman, 2016](#);

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Zakaria, 2001), do not apply much in Algeria. After her independence, Algeria experienced large socio-cultural and economic changes following the spread of education, including higher education. From the beginning of the third decade, the girls at university became a majority in what is known as "males' fields of study", such as civil engineering, marine engineering, agronomy, mechanical engineering, etc....

The number of women entrepreneurs in Algeria remains relatively low (9439 women, 3% of Algerian economic fabric according to the World Bank in 2007), with a majority in the craft (2830 according to ANGEM) (Guechtouli & Guechtouli, 2014).

In the 4th edition of National Forum of Women Entrepreneurs, Rédha Hamiani, former president of the Forum of business leaders, linked low female representation in entrepreneurship, with culture in Algerian society. Some social attitudes consider the access of women to business as an evil eye. That is also the result of the lack of entrepreneurial training in school reform (Ghiat, 2015; Ouazzi, 2014).

Compared to other societies in MENA region, "with regard to self-censorship related to socio-cultural context, it seems that the business environment and the Algerian social climate are much less discriminatory than what we tend to believe" (Metaiche, 2013). Despite the socio-economic changes in Algeria, women are still facing constraints and socio-cultural barriers.

Context and Background

In order to understand the reality of women entrepreneurs, their cultural constraints and challenges of women entrepreneurs, they should be studied with the local socio-cultural context. Kausar and Tlais (2011) pointed out that "Gender disparities that exist in Arabic societies cannot be understood without considering the challenges confronting women in the general structure of Arabic culture influenced by customs, traditions, practices, and religious beliefs" (Fernandes, 2017; Kausar & Tlais, 2011).

The social attitudes towards Algerian women entrepreneurs can be understood through highlighting the impacts of local culture and attitudes on women occupations and their managerial practices.

Local culture and social attitudes

The social and cultural attitudes are important in determining organisational culture and employees' motivation. Berreziga and Meziane (2012) pointed out that "entrepreneurship is not a social and economic phenomenon but also a social and cultural one. The entrepreneurial action cannot be understood outside the company to which the entrepreneur belongs" (Berreziga & Meziane, 2012).

It is important, at this stage, to shed light on two main concepts, which are attitudes and values and their impacts on female entrepreneurship. The concept of attitude can be defined as a situation in which the individual can be. It is a set of personal reactions to a particular object (Sillamy, 1967). It covers various meanings and refers to the orientation of thought, deep provisions of our being, and the state of mind related to certain values. All the values are bipolar (positive or negative) and are always with a certain intensity, ranging from hatred to love, from indifference to passion; we can order them on scales and see their measure (Sillamy, 1967; Thurstone, 1928).

While the value of a person is defined by Sillamy (1967), as "fluid, labile, always questioning; the individual seeking to define himself cannot do it without referring to his social universe. He cannot take a value in his own eyes, but carries the values that his group recognises for him; their location and status. The higher a person is in the social hierarchy, the more value he takes; this is one motive of the ambitions" (Sillamy, 1967). The success of women as entrepreneurs is related to "environmental factors

such as social norms and customs, which are different from one country to another and even from one region to another" (Arasti, 2008; Anggadwita & Dhewanto, 2016; Wanninayake, 2016).

Social attitudes and occupational practices

The nature of socialisation and the education received by children differentiates between the two genders. From early ages, girls have special games and toys to play with, which are different from those used by boys. Girls use toys of babies, kitchen, and cooking, while boys use games representing violence, weapons, wars, car mechanics, etc. The same interests are developed at schools and at the playing environments.

In school books, we find the same practices and the same culture that reinforces the difference of interests between girls and boys. These methods of socialisation and education in families, in schools, and in the society as a whole led to the expansion of culture of genders affecting the choice of their future occupations and jobs. That led to two distinct kinds of jobs and occupation, some for males and others for females.

The traditional culture of work is that women are prepared to be housewives, or perform some craft jobs at home such as sewing female clothes, or farmers beside their husbands or their family members.

This culture led to the rise of social cultural attitudes against the work of women outside their homes, and against mixing between the sexes in the workplace. And even with the social changes, women tend to occupy jobs, which are known as female jobs, such as educators, teachers, or lecturers at the university. Other occupations by women are in hospitals such as nursing, doctors, or related jobs such as chemists. Some other occupations are allowed for females in service activities.

From an investigation with women entrepreneurs, the majority of entrepreneurs interviewed said being confronted daily with negative social practices, which are often based on gender discrimination, especially within administrations they need to visit.

Social attitudes and managerial performance

Algerian culture was hostile to women's work outside their homes. The historical past of Algeria (colonization, poverty, underdevelopment ...) resulted in the spread of ignorance and backwardness, affecting the Algerian society in general and women in particular.

According to the traditional customs and cultural habits, which are becoming obsolete, a woman cannot handle men, nor give them orders. This is why some men have difficulty working under the command of women, or receive guidance from them. The culture of a male society is the origin of several socio-cultural problems of women entrepreneurs in Algeria. That is why it is a challenge for a woman to venture into an entrepreneurial activity in a hostile cultural environment.

Similar constraints are found in all North African societies (Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia). A study on women entrepreneurs in Morocco by the AMAPPE in 2004 and 2005 concluded the existence of "problems related mainly to cultural values and social rules, and are extremely important (the mentality of people, cause woman's difficulties, etc.)" (Salman et al., 2012).

They also found "in Morocco, women have long been relegated to the background by the traditions and customs that valued the man over the woman and confirmed his superiority over her" (Salman et al., 2012).

In Moroccan society, traditional values such as solidarity, honour, obedience, respect, and mutual aid are still present. Thus, the Moroccan culture is a patriarchal culture that has long been considering man as the one who commands and woman as the one who should obey (Gray & Finley-Hervey, 2005). These negative attitudes cultivate types of women's socialisation in society. "The socialisation of girls does not help to develop

their confidence, their independence, their sense of risk, and taste of innovation: skills which are necessary in any individual who wants to develop and manage his own business" (Rachdi, 2006).

In the words of a woman entrepreneur in Morocco, "There are people who until now, when they speak to you, they refuse to look at you in the eyes. They sometimes head to one of my male employees instead of talking with me, his boss" (Salman et al., 2012).

These attitudes, practices, and behaviours are widely spread in Algerian society, and cause a lot of burden for women entrepreneurs.

In going through the literature available about women entrepreneurship in developing countries, most studies concentrate on their economic and financial constraints (McElwee & Al-Riyami, 2003; Muravyev, Talavera, & Schafer, 2009). Several research papers were published about the impact of local culture on women entrepreneurship in developing countries (Arasti, 2008; Gray & Finley-Hervey, 2005; Hind Touissate, 2017). The impact of local culture on women entrepreneurs in Muslim environments is studied mainly in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. While social attitudes towards women entrepreneurs is not covered well by the literature and what is published is done through observations. No research, in my knowledge, used questionnaires to investigate the social attitudes towards women entrepreneurs found in Algeria and in MENA region in general.

That stresses the importance of this research about the social attitudes towards women entrepreneurs in Algeria, and its impact on their success.

Problem

It is widely known in the West that success of an individual is mainly related to his intelligence, his abilities, his training, and his personality without distinction between males and females. But that is not always true in developing countries, in males' societies, where local culture has strong impacts on human attitudes and behaviours, to understand the effect of culture related to gender with success. In males' societies, jobs and occupations of women are affected by local culture and attitudes. Women are forced to respect, in order to be in line with the social requirements.

Research questions

To study the problem of women entrepreneurs needs answers to the following questions:

1. What are the social attitudes towards women entrepreneurs in Algeria?
2. What are the impacts of being a female on the success/failure of her enterprise?
3. What are the subordinates' attitudes towards women entrepreneurs?
4. What are the managerial styles used by women entrepreneurs to face the negative social attitudes?
5. Has the social status of women entrepreneurs improved after becoming entrepreneurs?

Hypotheses

Five hypotheses were put down to guide our research:

1. The social attitudes towards women entrepreneurs are negative.
2. The gender of the entrepreneur has an effect on the success of his/her enterprise.
3. Subordinates do not accept easily to be managed by women en-

trepreneurs.

4. Women entrepreneurs manage their enterprises by rigour to face the negative social attitudes towards them.
5. The social status of women entrepreneurs improved after becoming entrepreneurs.

Questionnaire and Data Collection Procedures

A questionnaire was developed and used for the collection of data (Ghiat, 2014). Attention in this paper is paid to questions related to the cultural and social attitudes and their effects on women entrepreneurs in Algeria.

Sample of the study

65 questionnaires were filled in by women entrepreneurs and self-employed women. Characteristics of the sample members were as follows:

Table I
Ages of the sample members

| Age | Frequency | Rate |
|--------------|-----------|-------|
| 20-30 | 15 | 23.1% |
| 31-40 | 31 | 47.7% |
| 41-50 | 12 | 18.5% |
| More than 50 | 07 | 10.8% |
| Total | 65 | 100% |

As shown in Table I, (70.8%) of the sample are less than 41 years old.

Personal information

Table II
Level of Instruction

| | College | Secondary | University | Total |
|----------------------|---------|-----------|------------|-------|
| Level of Instruction | 09 | 24 | 32 | 65 |
| Percentage | 13.8% | 36.70% | 49.20% | 100% |

Almost half of the women entrepreneurs participating in this research (49.2%) are graduated from university.

Table III
Marital status

| | Marital Status | |
|----------|----------------|--------|
| Single | 25 | 38.50% |
| Married | 32 | 49.20% |
| Divorced | 03 | 4.60% |
| Widows | 05 | 7.70% |
| Total | 65 | 100% |

As shown in Table III, 49.2% of the sample are married.

Results

Results are presented in Tables from IV to IX dealing with

1. Social attitudes towards women entrepreneurs.
2. Impacts of the gender on entrepreneurial activity.
3. Attitudes of subordinates towards women entrepreneurs.
4. Women entrepreneurs' model of management.
5. The status of women entrepreneurs after becoming entrepreneurs.

Table IV
The social attitudes towards women entrepreneurs

| Quest No. | The social attitudes towards women entrepreneurs | Yes | % | No | % | Some-times | % |
|-----------|--|-----|------|----|------|------------|------|
| 34 | I am often harassed by men | 26 | 40.0 | 24 | 36.9 | 24 | 36.9 |
| 28 | The perception of men towards women entrepreneurs is significantly negative | 25 | 38.5 | 13 | 20.0 | 27 | 41.5 |
| 20 | Algerian society perceives positively the position of the woman entrepreneur | 20 | 30.8 | 21 | 32.3 | 24 | 36.9 |

As seen from Table IV, the perception of men towards women entrepreneurs is often negative, and women are harassed. The results shown in Table V, explain the fact of being women is behind their success (40.0%),

and 40% of the sample believe that it is difficult for a woman to be an entrepreneur.

Table V
Impacts of the gender on entrepreneurial success

| Quest No. | Impacts of the gender on entrepreneurial activity | Yes | % | No | % | Some-times | % |
|-----------|---|-----|------|----|------|------------|------|
| 25 | My success is due to the fact of being a woman | 26 | 40.0 | 25 | 38.5 | 14 | 21.5 |
| 18 | It is difficult for a woman to be an entrepreneur | 16 | 40.0 | 21 | 32.3 | 18 | 27.1 |
| 26 | The fact that I am a woman does not cause any problem for my business | 23 | 35.4 | 22 | 33.8 | 20 | 30.8 |

Table VI
Attitudes of subordinates towards women entrepreneurs

| Quest No. | Attitudes of subordinates towards women entrepreneurs | Yes | % | No | % | Some-times | % |
|-----------|---|-----|------|----|------|------------|------|
| 15 | My subordinates perform all my instructions | 38 | 58.5 | 05 | 07.7 | 21 | 32.3 |
| 27 | My employees are receptive to my instructions | 34 | 52.3 | 8 | 12.3 | 23 | 35.4 |
| 21 | Workers accept to be managed by women | 30 | 46.2 | 14 | 21.5 | 21 | 32.3 |

As shown in Table VI, only 58.5% of the sample, stated that subordinates perform all their instructions, and only 46.2% stated that workers accept to be managed by women. From Table VII, we understand that 49.2%

of women entrepreneurs manage their enterprises by rigour to show their strength to men.

Table VII
The managerial style of women entrepreneurs

| Quest No. | The managerial style of women entrepreneurs | Yes | % | No | % | Some-times | % |
|-----------|--|-----|------|----|------|------------|------|
| 17 | I manage my company with rigor to show my strength | 32 | 49.2 | 13 | 20.0 | 20 | 30.8 |
| 23 | I have no difficulty communicating with men subordinates | 13 | 20.0 | 27 | 41.5 | 25 | 38.5 |
| 22 | I have difficulties in communicating with women subordinates | 7 | 10.8 | 37 | 56.9 | 21 | 32.3 |

Table VIII
Impacts of being women entrepreneurs on their social status

| Quest No. | Their social status of women entrepreneurs | Yes | % | No | % | Some-times | % |
|-----------|---|-----|------|----|------|------------|------|
| 33 | My status has improved vis-à-vis the society after creating my enterprise | 44 | 67.7 | 11 | 16.9 | 10 | 15.4 |
| 35 | The success of female entrepreneurship requires a radical change of mentality | 42 | 64.6 | 9 | 13.8 | 14 | 21.5 |

Results in Table VIII show that 67.7% of women entrepreneurs, who participated in this research, agree that their social status has improved vis-à-vis society after creating their enterprises.

Discussion

From results derived from Table IV-VIII, several lessons are concluded about: The social attitudes towards women entrepreneurs, the impacts of gender on entrepreneurial success, the attitudes of subordinates towards women entrepreneurs, the managerial style of women entrepreneurs, and development of social status of women entrepreneurs.

The social attitudes towards women entrepreneurs

Social attitudes towards women affect their behaviours and performance. As stated by (Sillamy, 1967), "the individual seeking to define himself cannot do it without referring to his social universe".

Women's harassment at work is obvious in all societies, but even worse in males' societies. 40.0% of women entrepreneurs answered that they were often harassed and 39.9% of them stated they were harassed "from time to time". In spite of the social and cultural changes, and the entry of women to a wide range of professional activities, women are still subject to harassment and negative social attitudes.

To a question about whether the Algerian society perceives positively the position of the woman entrepreneur, the results showed that 30.8% perceived positively the position of women entrepreneurs, 32.3% of the sample said that the society perceived their activity negatively.

When asked about the attitudes of men towards women entrepreneurs, 38.5% said that men's perception was significantly negative, and 20.0% said that their perception of women entrepreneurs was positive. While 41.5% of the respondents said that their perception of them was "some-times" negative. That explains the fact that the Algerian society is changing, and more and more men became positive towards women entrepreneurs.

These answers confirm the fact of the negative attitudes towards female entrepreneurs in Algerian society. This result confirms the first hypothesis that "social attitudes towards women entrepreneurs are negative".

Impacts of the gender on entrepreneurial success

To a question if their success is related to the fact of being a woman, 40.0% answered "yes", while 38.5% answered "no".

It is well known in the Algerian society that entrepreneurship is a difficult job for women. From the point of view of women entrepreneurs, 40.0% of the sample answered "yes", it is difficult for a woman to be an entrepreneur. While 32.3% said "no", it is not difficult. That shows that the majority of the women entrepreneurs believe that entrepreneurship is a difficult job for women.

To another question whether the fact of being a woman, causes her problems in managing her enterprise, 35.4% said yes, it does not cause her any obstacle. While 33.8% said no, and they have problems in managing their enterprises as a result of being women, and 38.8% answered they have "sometimes" problems in managing their enterprise as result of being a woman.

From this investigation, a change in the perception of women entrepreneurs can be noticed in the Algerian society. However, this change needs more time to be reflected in the practice. As pointed out by [Arora \(2014\)](#), "Indian society is passing through a transition phase, whereby the change in people's perception towards women will be reflected in their action over a period of time".

Besides the environmental entrepreneurship constraints, women have cultural difficulties because of negative social attitudes against them. That confirms the second hypothesis that the gender of the entrepreneur has an effect on the success of his enterprise.

Attitudes of subordinates towards women entrepreneurs

The social attitudes are not limited to the social environment, but also touched the relations with "subordinate/supervisor" or "employees/women entrepreneurs".

To a question whether the subordinates perform all the women entrepreneurs' instructions, 58.5% said "yes", and only 07.7% said "no", while 32.3 said "sometimes".

To a question whether the employees are receptive to the women's instructions, 52.3% said "yes", 12.3% said "no", and 35.4% answered "sometimes".

To another question if workers accept to be managed by women, 46.2% answered "yes" and 21.5% said "no", while 32.3% said "sometimes".

The results confirmed the third hypothesis that "Subordinates do not accept easily to be managed by women entrepreneurs". The same results were reached in a research carried out at Oran (Algeria), [Dif and Benyahia-Taïbi \(2010\)](#) found that "Women activating in the public works sector said to have problems in being obeyed at the construction sites, especially in their early careers. They experience stress related to attitudes of the society" ([Dif & Benyahia-Taïbi, 2010](#)).

That shows the problems of human management in male societies in general, such as in Algeria, and it is worse when the supervisor is a woman.

Managerial style of Algerian women entrepreneurs

The social attitudes affect the effectiveness of communication mainly between males and females. The social attitudes towards women en-

trepreneurs led them to manage their enterprises in special ways. 49.2% of the women entrepreneurs stated that they manage their enterprises with rigour to show their strength. The rigorous model of management as applied by several members of the sample is a reaction to the social attitudes, including amongst their employees towards them.

When asked about the communication with men subordinates, 41.5% met difficulties in communicating with their subordinates, and 20.0% confirmed not to have communication difficulties with men, while 38.5% meet difficulties sometimes in communicating with men at work.

To another question about the communication difficulties with women subordinates, 10.8% said to have difficulties with them, while 56.9% answered to have no difficulties, and 32.3% meet problems "from time to time" with women subordinates.

That explains the reaction of Algerian women entrepreneurs in managing their enterprises by rigour to face the negative social attitudes towards them.

Result from this investigation confirmed observations by [Rachdi \(2006\)](#), that some subordinates in Morocco do not look at the eyes of their employers, women entrepreneurs, and prefer dealing with their male assistants ([Rachdi, 2006](#)).

The social status of women entrepreneurs

As far as the social status of women entrepreneurs is considered, 67.7% observed that their social status has improved, while 16.9% found that it has not improved, and 15.4% think that it has improved a little.

In spite of the social changes for the benefit of women in Algerian society, most women entrepreneurs think that it is not enough. 64.6% of the sample stated that the success of female entrepreneurship requires a radical change in social mentalities.

That explains the fact that women entrepreneurship helps to raise the women's status within society. Nevertheless, to have full success of women entrepreneurship requires radical change in men's and social mentality in general.

The results from Table VIII confirm the last hypothesis that "The social status of women entrepreneurs improved after becoming entrepreneurs". This result confirms the findings of [Singh and Monga \(2014\)](#) about the changing status of women entrepreneurs in Himachal Pradesh in India.

Conclusion

There is a genuine attention of politicians to encourage women entrepreneurship in Algeria through a strategy of youth employment. But women still meet insurmountable constraints because of the socio-cultural attitudes.

There is a progress in the number of women entrepreneurs in Algeria, but the change of people's mentality requires time. The socio-cultural environment in Algeria is changing slowly but surely.

We find more and more successful young educated women entrepreneurs, but the expansion of female entrepreneurship requires a radical change of males' attitudes towards female managers and entrepreneurs in order to reach a situation of no discrimination between genders.

More research needs to be carried out in different Arab countries with larger samples of women entrepreneurs in order to be able to compare the results. Results from this research can be used by decision-makers in making the right decisions for the benefit of women entrepreneurship in the Middle East and North Africa.

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