



DEVELOPING A FRAMEWORK OF SUCCESS OF EMIRATI WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

Khaled Alsaadi

PhD student in UPSI, Malaysia

Section Head - Khalifa Fund for Enterprise Development, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

khalid.alsaadi@khalifafund.ae

Rafiduraida Abdul Rahman

Assistant Professor, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris, Malaysia

rafiduraida@fpe.upsi.edu.my

Yasser Bentahar 

Assistant Professor, Higher College of Technology, United Arab Emirates

ybentahar@hct.ac.ae

Abstract

The purpose of this article is to investigate the factors leading to the success of women in entrepreneurial activities in UAE, and further to design a framework for successful women entrepreneurs. For this, a qualitative research is conducted among thirty successful women entrepreneurs to study the key success factors. One-on-one interviews were conducted with women entrepreneurs from different fields operating in the UAE and data are analyzed through the thematic approach. The outcome of this research is the creation of a framework that can be used by policy makers and potential women entrepreneurs seeking for successful entrepreneurial activities.

Keywords Entrepreneurship, Women entrepreneurs, Framework of success, United Arab Emirates

INTRODUCTION

Although, the entrepreneurial study' field has succeeded in establishing scientific "legitimacy" (Saporata, 1997) through the relevance of the questions it tackled, but also the response protocols adopted (Shane and Venkataraman, 2000), yet the entrepreneurial researcher is confronted with a plurality of researches, which address very different issues. This dynamic took hold particularly in the last two decades, where we have witnessed a proliferation of research that apprehends the phenomenon from several angles of attack (Rachdi, 2016). One of these angles, is the study of women entrepreneurs, not only because women face big difficulties in becoming entrepreneurs (GEM 2018-2019), but also to the scarcity of researches on women entrepreneurs in developing and emerging economies (Tripathi and Singh, 2018), whereas the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is not an exception (Ahmad et al. 2017).

According to Sandybayev (2018), women not only continue to be one of the decisive factors of social production in general, but also by the reason of women's entrepreneurship deployment that creates today opportunities for building up the innovative potential of the modern UAE economy. However, although the level of women's participation in novel enterprises in the UAE has been observed and described (KF report, 2018), only few data and details are available concerning the profiles of successful entrepreneurs. The GEM reports (2010-2016) showed the important role that Governments play in the entrepreneurship by empowering more and more women to be able to support themselves and their families in the long-term. Which is witnessed by the huge effort done over the last decade by the United Arab Emirates in increasing the rate of Emirati women's involvement in business activities generally and in women's entrepreneurship especially (GEM reports 2019).

In UAE, women seek entrepreneurship for self-achievement because these moves improve their socioeconomic status within the society (Al Saadi et al, 2019). In the Arab countries, especially the Gulf region, family social status and family ties are important factors in shaping both female and male entrepreneurs (Naser et al, 2009; Mastercard report, 2017). Despite the ease, the UAE is still a highly competitive market for female entrepreneurs to start their businesses, moreover, the success of women entrepreneurs also represents a great motivation for other Emirati women to participate in the entrepreneurial activities. This research represents a framework of success of Emirati women entrepreneurs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Simon et al. (2017) found in their study of the literature that customs, beliefs, culture and religion have been at the forefront of the bias against female entrepreneurs in a number of developed

and developing economies over the past decades. However, there are more entrepreneurial traits that the researchers has to consider in order to bring a clear insight of the topic, and then to clarify better the path of research.

Entrepreneurship and especially women entrepreneurship in particular, plays an important role in nation building. It has three core processes including initiation, promotion and distribution of wealth and service. An entrepreneur is a critical factor in economic development and an integral part of the socio-economic transformation (Bhardwaj and Mittal, 2017).

Sandybayev (2018) found in his research that challenges and obstacles to the development of women's entrepreneurship in countries with economies in transition can be divided into three types; economic barriers, educational barriers and cultural barriers. Ideological obstacles and socio-cultural barriers to the deployment of women's businesses. These are the traditional processes of socialization for women, stereotypes about the role of women in business and society and the socio-psychological attitudes of women themselves about this.

When studying the success factors of an entrepreneur (founder), it is important to highlight the impact of the human capital as it is demonstrated by many researchers. Rauch and Rijdsdijk (2013) observed that the general human capital of founders (their training and professional experience) has a positive effect on the growth of the firm. On the other hand, Siepel et al. (2015) show that the human capital of the founders has a positive impact on the long-term growth of firms belonging to the high-tech sector.

In their model, Chandler and Hanks (1994a) have found that the entrepreneurial skills and the managerial skills of the entrepreneur are important factors for the success of the entrepreneur, while Chanut-Guieu and Guieu (2015) added that a visionary and skilled entrepreneur promotes the hyper growth of the SME. Lebegue (2012), found that the success of women entrepreneurs, is based on indicators such as the degree of personal development, satisfaction and the balance between private and professional life.

Inspired by the 3M model by Bates al (2007) advanced as essential for the success of small businesses and entrepreneurs, Brush et al (2009) proposed a new model which comprehends the female entrepreneurial phenomenon in a holistic way called the 5Ms model. Brush et al not only they offered an adaptation of 3M, namely Money, Market and Management, to the singularity of female entrepreneurship, but also proposed an extension of the model to 5Ms by introducing "Motherhood" and "Meso-Macro environment".

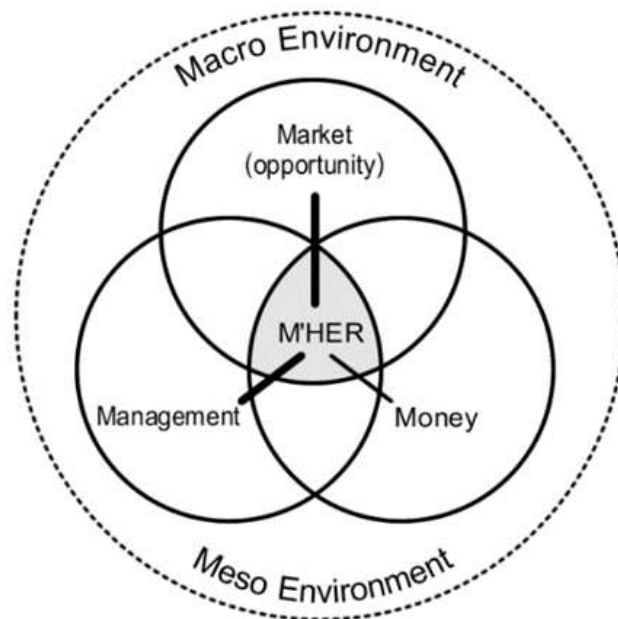


Figure 1. The 5M Model of Women Entrepreneurs, by Brush, de Bruin & Welter, 2009

Research so far has focused mostly on the motivation and challenges faced by female Emirati entrepreneurs (Norita, 2017). This study instead, focuses more on the success of Emirati women entrepreneurs, by taking in consideration the mentioned factors in literature and conducting a qualitative research on successful Emirati women entrepreneurs.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In order to investigate the success factors of women entrepreneurs in UAE, qualitative methodology seems to more effective as it is the scientific method that leads researchers to understand a given research problem or topic from the perspectives of the local population (Mack et al. 2011). On the other hand, the adoption of the qualitative research in this research is also due to its flexibility allowing a greater spontaneity and adaptation of the interaction between the researcher and the study participant (Woodsong, 2011).

The authors of this research are adopting the in-depth interviews, which are usually conducted face-to-face and involve one interviewer and one participant. The in-depth interview is a technique designed to elicit a vivid picture of the participant's perspective on the research topic (Fontana & Frey, 2005). The interview was a semi-constructed one where the questions are pre-planned prior to the interview but the interviewer gives the interviewee the chance to elaborate and explain particular issues through the use of open-ended questions (Dörnyei, 2007).

Recruiting participants (Emirati women entrepreneurs) is often a challenge, for a variety of reasons, including the often delicate nature of working with vulnerable populations; possible stigmatization of participants resulting from affiliation with the study; the high mobility of some populations; participants' concerns about confidentiality; and misinformation, lack of information, fear, or rumors about the study.

Thirty respondents were recruited from Khalifa Fund for Enterprise Development (KF) database or several reasons. The first one, KF is the only organization in the UAE that funds the Emirati people who will to launch a small and medium enterprises. The second reason, KF has a full financial and logistical support from the government. The third reason, KF has conducted many studies to enhance the contribution of SMEs in the GDP. The fourth reason, KF funded the third of the projects established by Emirati women entrepreneurs during the last decade.

Taking advantages of having a good database of Emirati women entrepreneurs, the researcher adopted in this research the purposive sampling method as purposive sampling can be more realistic than randomization in terms of time, effort and cost needed in finding informants. Moreover, Purposive sampling can be applied to research in a number of ways, such as in preliminary studies where the researcher is still testing the feasibility of a proposed study (Poggie 1972), sampling informants with a specific type of knowledge or skill (Li et al. 2006, Prance 2004, Vargas and van Andel 2005), comparisons of cultural practices (Neupane et al. 2002), case studies (Dolisca et al. 2007, Parlee & Berkes 2006), and when the population is too small for a random sample (Tran & Perry 2003).

Based on this database, the researchers has chosen only successful women entrepreneurs that have the following characteristics. First she should be an Emirati female CEO or entrepreneur who founds and runs her business. Second, the business she is running must be recognized for its potential growth by showing proof of profit for the last 2 fiscal years. Finally the company has to be in business for at least five years.

In order to analyze the interview, first, the researchers had to deal with the confidentiality of the respondents by changing the real names to WPn (Women Entrepreneur' number). Second, the authors had to opt for the thematic analysis, which is a commonly used data analysis strategy, and considered as an approach across all qualitative designs (Castleberry and Nolen, 2018). Vaismoradi et al. (2013) described thematic analysis as a descriptive method that reduces the data in a flexible way that dovetails with other data analysis methods.

Data collection that came in a variety of forms such audio and written is typically transcribed, in other words 'converted' into written data, prior to analysis. In order to analyze our interview, the thematic analysis is then adopted in this research; in order to identify themes, patterns in the data that are important or interesting, and use the themes to catch the main key

words and concepts that will be categorized through the success factors of the women entrepreneurs.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

From analyzing the data collected from the interviews, the main success factors can be categorized in three main factors: personal characteristics, family support, and Government support.

1. Personal characteristics: based on the interview analysis, the authors found that women entrepreneurs claimed that possessing some personal characteristics is very important for the success of any entrepreneurs mainly for female ones. Moreover, from the interview excerpt two categories of personal characteristics emerged, where the first one is related to the personality of women entrepreneurs, and the second category is related to their know-what and know-how. WP26 mentioned in her word "...commitment, dedication and passion are the most important personal factors that led me succeed in my coffee shop..." While WP5 shared "...vision, passion and perseverance made me succeed in my cosmetic company...every women entrepreneur should have those factors in order to be different and be a productive and successful woman entrepreneur...". In the same perspective, WP9 said "...passion, perseverance and courage are the factors I thinks led me to start my training center and succeed on it. While WP14 added "...dedication, commitment and passion made me successful entrepreneurs in managing the house services company and make my customers satisfied..."

WP23 for instance confessed "taking some trainings in planning and management changed my managing style and allowed me to increase my profit and be a successful women entrepreneur". While WP19, a diploma holder, said "...knowledge and experience guided me to succeed in my coffee shop, then I encourage other women entrepreneurs to gain knowledge about management and strategy because I think that skills are the most important success factor for any entrepreneur to make the difference..."

From what is said, the researchers found that these women consider that several important characteristics such as commitment, dedication, passion, vision and perseverance enable them to be successful women entrepreneurs. On the other hand, some entrepreneurs believe that expertise, skills and education are the most important enablers for any entrepreneur, especially Emirati women to open their companies and succeed.

2. Family Support: the findings of this research highlight the big role of the family in the success of women entrepreneurs, which confirms a recent study done by the Bank of America

(2018). In fact, WP22 said “I got financial support from my family, which made me start and succeed my bakery company”. While WP13 shared this: “I was not happy at work so I decided to open my business, but I was facing a big problem as my savings were not enough to open a business. Then my husband supported me financially and logistically...also, because of UAE culture and the Islamic religion, solidarity and support are very important factors, however women cannot just count on that without hard work and a good plan”. In addition, WP8 had confessed to the researchers her attitude toward the role of the family “...even though I did not need money from my family to start my Beauty spa, but my family gave me a moral support at the beginning and during every step of my business growth. Also sometimes, I was thinking about stopping my business but my family believed on me, gave me motivation and enabled me to be a successful woman entrepreneur...”

WP27 (56 years) highlighted the family support with this statement: “...due to the lack of my knowledge, I needed the support of my family to help me in managing my business (bakery), in fact my family, mainly my sons and daughters supported me very much to become a successful women entrepreneur”.

Based on the findings above regarding the role of the family, it is found that women entrepreneurs succeed because they received a valuable family support. This support can come in the form of, either financial or moral. This support creates motivation for them and help to overcome the challenges they face.

3. Government support: all women entrepreneurs insisted that government support is very important for any entrepreneur, either women or men. WP23, owner of desert safari company, said “...the Government made it easy for women to open their business, through Khalifa Fund I got the capital needed for my business as well as the logistical support”. WP21 (26 years), owner of a Bakery, said “...I feel lucky that I am an Emirati woman living in a country where the Government does miracles for its citizens...I wouldn't get capital if there is no Khalifa Fund which gave me the financial support as well as important advices to succeed in my business...”. WP10, said “...I didn't get financial support from the Government, but I witnessed the support of public entities that tremendously helped me in starting and succeeding my pharmaceutical company. I would like to add also that UAE Government deleted all the bureaucratic procedures by digitalizing them”. WP26 (31 years) also joined WP10 in the same idea and said “...the Government has changed the game plan by allowing women the right to compete with men by facilitating all the procedures to open the companies...Government has many plans to help entrepreneurs to succeed but not much advertisement for that...”.

From these statements, it is found that Government financial and logistical supports play an important role in the success of women entrepreneurs. Moreover, the findings below show clearly that Government doesn't only support financially but also highly contributes through structural and legal support.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Through the findings, the authors found several success factors such as the personal characteristics of women entrepreneurs, the family support and Government support. The personal characteristics like passion, dedication, commitment, charisma, knowledge, etc. play a very crucial role to lead women entrepreneurs to be successful. In addition, the family plays a very critical role through financial and moral support. Moreover, the Government of UAE and through its institutions and policies enable women entrepreneurs with several kinds of support such as financial, via Khalifa fund, and structural support witnessed by the policies, strategies and logistical support.

In order to conclude our research, by integrating all the finding, which have led the authors to design the framework of successful Emirati women entrepreneurs. This framework can be applied in UAE or in the GCC (as the characteristics of countries are more or less the same).



Figure 2. Framework of successful Emirati women entrepreneurs

The framework shows the roadmap how to make women entrepreneurs successful. The main pillars of this framework consist on the interplay and coordination between external factors such as the culture, the awareness and Government institutions; and internal factors such as the personal characteristics, the skills, the family role and the financial availability.

External factors: the culture has to accept the involvement of women in the entrepreneurial activities. The awareness of women entrepreneurs (and those initiating the process of entrepreneurship) is important to let them know their rights as well as the procedures and constraints they might face. Therefore, more actions must be taken by the government in order to raise more awareness in the societies regarding the importance of women in entrepreneurship and increase trust in them. Meanwhile, the contribution of the Government institutions, mainly the financial and educational should be continued to provide the right support to these women.

On the other hand, the internal factors vary from entrepreneur to another. Through this framework, the researchers highlights the importance of family support, the availability of capital and financial aids, the knowledge and skills toward the entrepreneurial activities and the charisma, personality of the woman entrepreneur as a risk taker and a hard worker. It is imperative for the women entrepreneurs to understand and exploit these crucial factors namely appropriate skills and knowledge, availability of funds and family support to facilitate them to achieve success in their business. Moreover, this research has a great impact on theory, indeed many studies, articles and researches about entrepreneurship have been described into the literature. Nevertheless, there has been little work done, especially in UAE, about the key success factors guiding women to launch their business. Unlike the previous researches devoted to analyze separately the challenges facing the women entrepreneurs, this article presents a study of an integrated approach incorporating drivers, barriers and enablers and has the privilege of being one of the very limited researches in the UAE suggesting an integrated approach for the success of women entrepreneurs.

However, the purposive sample size used in this study is relatively small and restricted to the use of KF database. As a result, the outcome of this exploratory research may not be generalized to all sectors and to all type of women entrepreneurs. Further research can be developed in order to confirm and further validate this framework. Thus, future research in this field must endeavor to collect data from a bigger population within other sectors that have not been covered in this study. Also, as the United Arab Emirates is part of Arab countries and GCC, it can be useful to adopt a comparative research between several countries in order to investigate more about different factors leading to the success of Arab women entrepreneurs.

REFERENCES

Ahmad N., Al-Mazrouee F., Ranova-Fredrick M. (2017) Motivation, Voices, and Visions of Women Entrepreneurs in the UAE. In: Benlamri R., Sparer M. (eds) Leadership, Innovation and Entrepreneurship as Driving Forces of the Global Economy. Springer Proceedings in Business and Economics. Springer, Cham.

Ahmad, Norita & Al-Mazrouee, Fatima & Ranova-Fredrick, Mariela. (2017). Motivation, Voices, and Visions of Women Entrepreneurs in the UAE. 10.1007/978-3-319-43434-6_50.

Alsaadi, K; Abdul Rahman, R and Bentahar, Y (2019). "Women entrepreneurs in United Arab Emirates: Enablers and challenges". International Journal of Social Science and Economics Research. Volume 4, Issue 3, 2019.

Bates, T., Jackson, W.E. III and Johnson, J.H. Jr. (2007) Introduction to the Special Issue on Advancing Research on Minority Entrepreneurship. *Annals of the American Academy of Political Science and Social Science*; 613 (September), 10 -17.

Bhardwaj, B.R. & Mittal, V., 2017, 'Women entrepreneurship: A tool for work life balance', in International conference on technology and business management, BVIMR, New Delhi, April 10–12, 2017, pp. 44–50

Brush, Candida G., Anne de Bruin., dan Friederike Welter. (2009). A gender-aware framework for women's entrepreneurship. *International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship*, Vol. 1, No. 1.

Castleberry, A., & Nolen, A. (2018). Thematic analysis of qualitative research data: Is it as easy as it sounds? *Currents in Pharmacy Teaching and Learning*, 10, 807-815.

Chandler, G. N. , & Hanks, S. H. (1994a) Founder competence, the environment, and venture performance. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 18(3), 77–89.

Dörnyei, Z. (2007) *Research methods in applied linguistics: Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methodologies*. Oxford University Press Oxford.

Global Entrepreneurial Monitor - Global Report 2018/19, Available Online: [http://www.gemconsortium.org/report/KF_report_\(2016\)](http://www.gemconsortium.org/report/KF_report_(2016).). Khalifa Fund Annual Report 2016. Retrieved from <https://www.khalifafund.ae/MyAngular/ResourceFiles/2016annualreport.pdf>

Mack, N., Woodsong, C., MacQueen, K., Guest, G., & Namey, E. (2005). *Qualitative Research Methods: A Data Collector's Field Guide*.

Mastercard Index of Women Entrepreneurs (MIWE) 2018, available Online: https://newsroom.mastercard.com/wpcontent/uploads/2018/03/MIWE_2018_Final_Report.pdf

Naser, K., Rashid Mohammed, W. and Nuseibeh, R. (2009), "Factors that affect women entrepreneurs: evidence from an emerging economy", *International Journal of Organizational Analysis*, Vol. 17 No. 3, pp. 225-247.

Rauch, A. & Rijsijk, S.A. (2013). The effects of general and specific human capital on long-term growth and failure of newly founded businesses. *Entrepreneurship Theory & Practice*, 37(4), 923–941.

Sandybayev, Almaz. (2017). *Entrepreneurial Motivations as Determinants of Youth Entrepreneurship Challenges: A Case of Business College in UAE*.

Saporta, B. (1997), "Small and Medium Enterprises Strategies", in *Management Encyclopedia*, coord. Y. Simon and P. Joffre, 2nd edition, Oxford University Press, pp. 3105-3128, Volume III.

Shane, S., & Venkataraman, S. (2000). The Promise of Entrepreneurship as a Field of Research.

Siepel, J., Cowling, M., & Coad, A. (2015). Long-run drivers of growth for UK high-technology firms. *Advances in Entrepreneurship: Firm Emergence and Growth*. In J. Katz & A. Corbett (Eds.), *Entrepreneurial Growth: Individual, Firm, and Region* (pp. 95–126). Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Simon Mark and Jiang Ruihua Joy (2017) "The Role of Trust in Social Entrepreneurship: A Case Study of Global Brigades," *New England Journal of Entrepreneurship*: Vol. 20 : No. 1 , Article 4.

Tripathi, V; Singh, A. P.; Roy, R. (2018). Effect of economic growth initiatives on regional economies: a study in the Indian context. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation Management (IJEIM)*, Vol. 22, No. 3.

Vaismoradi, M., Turunen, H., Bondas, T. (2013). Content analysis and thematic analysis: Implications for conducting a qualitative descriptive study *Nurs Health Sci*, 15 (3) (2013), pp. 398-405

Woodsong, C. (2011). *Qualitative Research Methods: A Data Collector's Field Guide*. Family Health International.