



## Understanding female motivation for entrepreneurship in Mena region: the case of Algeria

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### Abstract

Algerian women have opened up to entrepreneurship, to challenge traditional attitudes and environmental constraints. Female entrepreneurship is part of women's struggle to achieve their freedom and dignity against the culture of arginalization. This can be regarded as an insurgency action against the culture of submission. In order to be able to help the movement of female entrepreneurship in the countries of the South, the understanding of their socio-cultural characteristics is necessary.

These socio-cultural attitudes are the result of the socialization of women in their ocieties. Salman et al. (2012) concluded that "the socialization of girls in Morocco does not contribute to developing their self-confidence, their autonomy, their sense of risk and their taste for innovation: the skills yet necessary in every individual who wishes to develop and manage his own".

Despite the socio-cultural changes that have been experienced by the Algerian society, and MINA Region in general, there are always resistance and clashes with traditions.

In order to study the manifestations of socio-cultural attitudes, the resistance against the emancipation of women, the insurrection of female entrepreneurs and the desire to liberate themselves from the social traditions that limit their ambitions, the results of a Questionnaires are being exploited, as well as interviews conducted with women entrepreneurs in Algeria.

The aim of this communication is to clarify the motivations behind the participation of Algerian women in the entrepreneurial fields, which is often expressed as the rejection of a socio-cultural reality, more than an economic need.

**Keywords:** female entrepreneurship, submissive culture, insurgency against male dominance.

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## **Introduction:**

Since the end of the 20th century, Algeria has seen the emergence of women into entrepreneurial activities, as a result of a generalization policy of education for young generations and at all levels, as education has become an obligation for all.

A number of factors have motivated women to venture into entrepreneurial activities, because of the economic necessity. They are also motivated by the actions of the State through the employment of young people. Young girls are more motivated to study and to get themselves out of a traditional situation, so that they can free themselves from the traditions that have chained them for a long time, and which often limits their roles in their homes, looking after their husbands and Children, with limited prospects and with no broad ambitions.

A large proportion of young girls became engaged in entrepreneurship as a way of meeting the challenge against the social culture that neglects them. They seek economic and social positions by imposing themselves in society.

The aim of this research is to clarify the motivations behind the participation of Algerian women in the entrepreneurial domains, which is often expressed as the rejection of a socio-cultural reality, more than an economic need. Women from Middle East and North Africa (MINA Region) share the same cultural values.

The socio-cultural constraints of women entrepreneurs in Algeria are identified, as well as the motivation behind the creation of their enterprises. Among these factors is the desire to emancipate, to assert itself, to succeed, and to have more power in the face of social and economic challenges.

## **Problem and importance of the research**

Social culture in MINA in Region, male societies is characterized by the fact that women are still in second position, with regard to the occupation of positions of responsibility and social positions. This reality has begun to change since the end of the 20th century, but still remains strong. Algerian women have opened up to entrepreneurship, to meet the challenge, in the face of traditional attitudes and environmental constraints. Female entrepreneurship is part of women's struggle to achieve their freedoms and dignity against the culture of marginalization. This can be regarded as an insurgency action against the culture of submission. In order to be able to help the movement of female entrepreneurship in the countries of the South, the understanding of their socio-cultural characteristics is necessary.

## **Theoretical framework**

Motivation of women entrepreneurship is motivated by local culture. Findings suggest that independence-motivated and growth-motivated entrepreneurs flourish in cultures where social relationships are important, indicating that culture may be important (Stephan, Hart and Drew, 2015).

Culture is a complex concept. "Culture" when narrowly defined can be seen as the set of all the ideas, values, etc. which are shared and transmitted within a group, between individuals of the same generation and also between generations (Boyd and Richerson, 1985).

Attitudes and beliefs are influenced by local culture, that shapes human behaviour. « Research at the individual level of analysis shows a link between values, beliefs and behaviour, it is plausible that the differences in national culture in which these values and beliefs are imbedded, may influence a wide range of behaviours, including the decision to become self-employed rather than to work for others" (Mueller and Thomas, 2001).



The same result is reached by (Uhlener and Thurink, 2007), that “When looking from the macro perspective, entrepreneurship exists as a result of differences in values and beliefs between society and prospective entrepreneurs. Thus, this clash of values may drive entrepreneurs to proceed into entrepreneurship in a usually non-entrepreneurial culture”.

While Butter and Moore (1997; p. 41), pointed out that women’s entrepreneurial motivations are “a complex function of personal aspirations and organizational influences” Bartol and Martin (1998) classified female motivation into: (I) Personal characteristics (ii) Life-path circumstances and (iii) Environmental factors.

To be entrepreneur is influenced by local cultural environment. As pointed out by (Osowska et al. 2013), “Individuals are born into certain already constructed ‘environments’, which are an important source of culture and cultural learning, and therefore, have a considerable impact on the individual’s behaviour, beliefs and decisions (...). Thus, attitudes towards entrepreneurship may be regarded as being cultural rather than individual variables.

Material need is an important drive for entrepreneurship. As pointed out by Hani (2015), Small-scale enterprises represent an important means of income for women in developing countries. They provide employment and income to alleviate poverty. Several papers tackled the tasks and characteristics of women entrepreneurs. According to Khanka (2013), “women entrepreneurs are those women who think of a business enterprise, initiate it, organize and combine the factors of production, operate the enterprise and undertake risks and handle economic uncertainty involved in running a business enterprise”. Psychological factors motivate women towards entrepreneurship, as entrepreneurship brings status to women. According to Naffziger, Hornsby and Kuratko (1994), the motivation of individuals is influenced by their needs, attitudes and values (Osowska et al. 2013, p2). Singh (2012) founds “a sense towards independent decision-making on their life and career is the motivational factor behind this urge”.

Cultural environment encourages or discourages young women to set up their entrepreneurial project. “The start-up decision can thus be seen as the product of motives and influences from society’s cultural perception of entrepreneurship” (Chamorro-Premuzic et al., 2014). The same result is reached by (Arenius and Minniti, 2015), who concluded that “Personal perceptions and judgments about the environment, although often biased, seem to be highly correlated with an individual’s decision to start business”

Women are also motivated to entrepreneurship in order to be independent from the hierarchical requirements in organizations. Charantimath (2012) argues that it is not always easy for women to find jobs that will be compatible with their family responsibilities and household chores. Thus, many women are attracted by the idea of self-employment in enterprises adjoining their house premises, with flexible hours, which allows them to take care of both home and business. Entrepreneurial society is characterized by low uncertainty avoidance and willingness to explore unknown situations (Osowska et al. 2013, p5).

While Hisrich and Brush (1986) classified women’s motivation into push and pull factors. These findings revealed that most women in their study cited push factors as their major motivation into business. These factors include; factors of frustration and freedom in their previous jobs, lack of satisfaction, while pull factors include: independence, autonomy and family security (Moses, Olokundun, and Mosundola, 2014. P. 45).

Several factors influence women to take decision about becoming entrepreneurs. Vesalainen and Pihkala (1999) identified two schools of thoughts as the main factors determining entrepreneurial actions among women; these are ‘environmental’ and ‘people’ schools. The people factor is known also as “trait approach” emphasizes on the entrepreneurial characteristics such as the need for achievement.



### **Culture and entrepreneurship in MINA Region:**

The economic environment in Algeria is difficult, and the action of undertaking an entrepreneurial activity is difficult for men, and many fails and abandon this activity, and this is more difficult for women. It is a real challenge for women engaging themselves in entrepreneurship on several fronts: family, society, financial constraints, bureaucracy and business management in such a competitive world.

Similar constraints are encountered in other MINA countries. According to Salman et al., "Problems related mainly to cultural values and social norms, and remain extremely important (the mentality of people, difficulties as a woman, etc.)" (Salman et al. 2012, p5).

The traditional culture of society, is the most restrictive factor for a woman entrepreneur in Algeria, as in all the MINA countries. As mentioned by Grey and Finley-Hervey: In Moroccan society, traditional values such as solidarity, honour, obedience, respect and mutual assistance are still present. Thus, Moroccan culture is a patriarchal culture that has long regarded man as the one who commands and the woman who must obey him (Grey and Finley-Hervey, 2005). According to Salman et al. (2012), "The majority of women say that their gender has been a problem for them, whether they are close to their surroundings or to the outside world. More than half of the women interviewed admit that being a woman has a direct influence on their activity as entrepreneurs. Similarly, in most developing countries, "women are often perceived as objects of pity, often having a counter-productive marginal status in their societies" (Yakubu, 2001, p. 108).

These socio-cultural attitudes are the result of the socialization of women in their societies. Salman et al. concluded that "the socialization of girls does not contribute to developing their self-confidence, their autonomy, their sense of risk and their taste for innovation: the skills yet necessary in every individual who wishes to develop and manage his own (Rachdi, 2006).

### **The motivations of Algerian women towards entrepreneurship:**

Algerian women opt for entrepreneurship for several reasons according to their economic and social situations. They can be driven by economic necessity as a means of combating unemployment. It can also be a means of gaining respect, self-assertion in the society. It can be also used as a means of autonomy and independence, power, emancipation, and equality with men, and a means of combating injustice and males' hegemony. Entrepreneurship helps women also get rid of the inferiority complex women in MINA region suffer from.

### **Needs and desires of women entrepreneurs:**

Women in MINA region tend to satisfy several economic needs, psychological and cultural desires through entrepreneurship, as follows:

#### **1. Economic needs**

Among the objectives of women is to find a job to satisfy their economic needs, in an underdeveloped society, where jobs are scarce because of the economic crisis. Starting up personal business stays the only solution for employment.

#### **2. Insurrection against injustice and male hegemony**

Entrepreneurship is seen as an issue that allows women to free themselves from the social injustice and hegemony of a male society, where women are often in a back-position.



### 3. Desire for independence and emancipation

Among the objectives of female entrepreneurship is the independence of the socio-cultural constraints of a traditional society that conceives the role and natural position of a woman is at home, to serve her husband and her children. The work of women outside their home was an exception till the end of the twentieth century in MINA Region.

### 4. Desire for power and respect

The position of a woman in her society is reflected in her income and her economic self sufficiency. This is why entrepreneurship is a method of gaining power and respect in society.

### 5. Self-fulfilment

Arab women have suffered marginalization from their socio-cultural environment, so the modern educated Arab women seek to realize their aspirations, to prove their personality as a useful component of the society.

These needs and desires are presented in following figure.

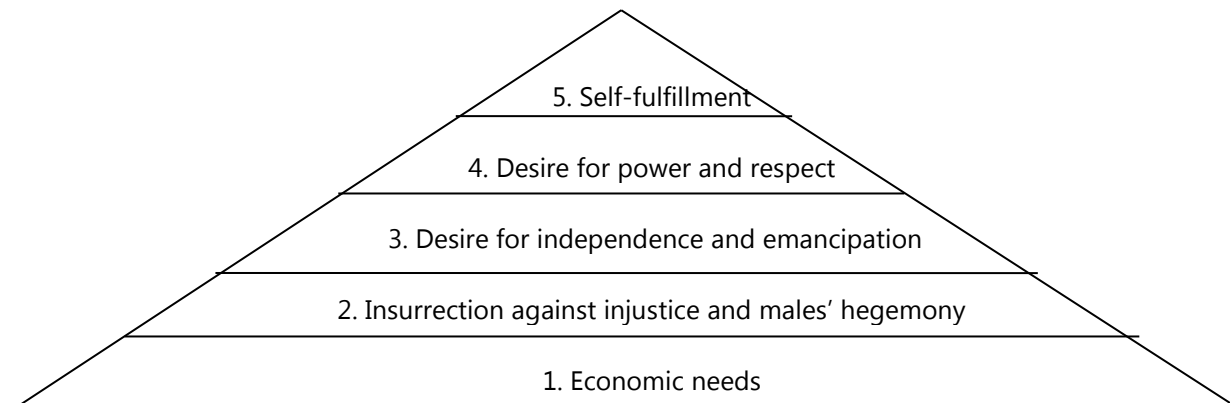


Figure 1: The needs and desires for motivations of women towards entrepreneurship

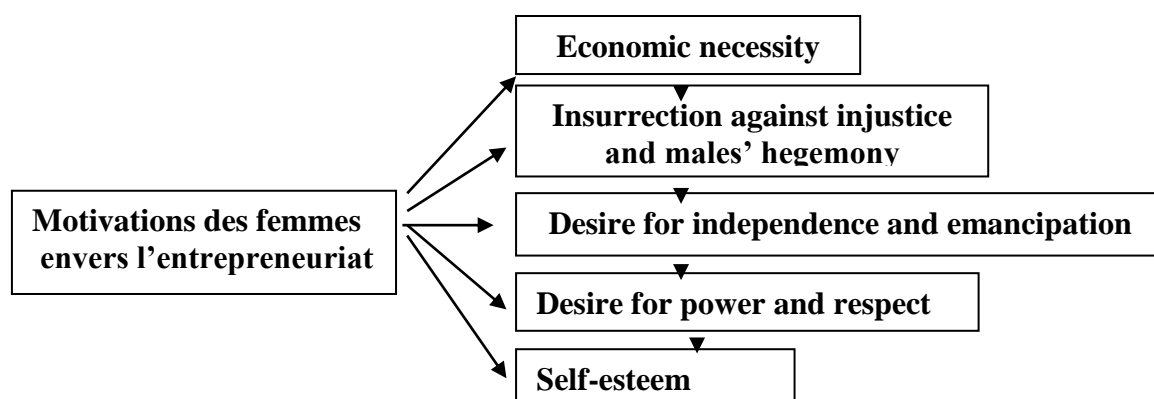


Figure 1: The motivating factors of women towards entrepreneurship in MINA Region

Despite the socio-cultural changes experienced by Algerian society, and Maghreb societies in general, there are always resistances and clashes with traditions. In Morocco, "if the situation of Moroccan women has changed dramatically, the attitudes and perceptions of society have not evolved sufficiently" (Salman, N., Al Abboudi, M., and Henda S., S. (2012).



### **Methodology:**

In order to study the motivation of women entrepreneurs towards entrepreneurship, their socio-cultural attitudes, their desire for emancipation and liberty, and their insurrection against traditional socio-cultural environment. A questionnaire was developed and exploited for the data collection. Interviews were conducted also with women entrepreneurs in Algeria.

### **Research Questions:**

In order to study the problem of research, and to fully understand the motivations of women entrepreneurs in MINA Region in general, and in Algeria in particular. Five questions were put down:

- 1- Are they motivated by economic necessity?
- 2- Are they motivated by a desire for self-confirmation?
- 3- Are they motivated by the desire for autonomy and emancipation?
- 4- Are they motivated by the desire for power and social recognition?
5. Are they motivated by the desire for being equal to men within the society?

### **Data Collection Tool:**

In order to answer these questions, a questionnaire was developed through four stages:

- 1- Discussions with people of both genders in Algerian society.
- 2-Open interviews with women entrepreneurs.
- 3- Writing a questionnaire with open questions.
- 4- Development of a questionnaire with closed answers

The questionnaire, "Index of motivations for female entrepreneurship" (IMFE) was developed, with 20 items divided into 5 aspects:

1. Work for income.
2. Self-confirmation.
3. Desire for autonomy from cultural constraints.
4. Desire for power and recognition.
5. Revolt against the culture men's domination.

The questions were discussed with a sample of women entrepreneurs. The psychometric aspects, tell that reliability and validity, were discussed with two teachers in research methodology at the University of Oran 2.

In response to questions the entrepreneurs had to respond by choosing between: I agree very much, I agree, no importance, do not agree or do not agree at all, as shown on table 1.



Table 1: scale of answers.

|                   |         |               |              |                     |
|-------------------|---------|---------------|--------------|---------------------|
| I agree very much | I agree | No importance | Do not agree | Do not agree at all |
| 1                 | 2       | 3             | 4            | 5                   |

**Sample of the study:**

This study covered 20 women entrepreneurs or self-employed from the city of Oran, Algeria. It is the second largest city of Algeria.

**Results:**

The results obtained are presented in the tables from 1 to 5.

Table Nr. 1: The choice of entrepreneurship for its high income

|   | 1. Working for good income   | Mean  | Std. Dev. |      |
|---|--|-------|-----------|------|
| 1 | The most important thing for a woman is to work, no matter the job                             | 2.89  | 1.49      |      |
| 2 | The most important thing in the entrepreneurial profession is the income                       | 2.00  | 1.03      |      |
| 3 | The work as entrepreneur is important for me as it allows me to support financially my family. | 2.30  | 1.17      |      |
| 4 | I became entrepreneur, because I did not find other jobs.                                      | 3.00  | 1.49      |      |
|   |  | 10.19 | Mean      | 2.55 |



Table Nr. 2: The choice of entrepreneurship for self-confirmation

|   | 2. Personality and self-confirmation.  | Mean | Std. Dev. |      |
|---|--|------|-----------|------|
| 5 | working as an entrepreneur allows me to prove my personality and self-esteem | 1.85 | 0.93      |      |
| 6 | My job as entrepreneur allows me to prove my abilities                       | 1.65 | 0.75      |      |
| 7 | Entrepreneurship has given me the courage to confront obstacles.             | 1.65 | 0.75      |      |
| 8 | Entrepreneurial job helps women to achieve their desire to excel             | 1.74 | 0.93      |      |
|   |  | 6.89 | Mean      | 1.72 |

Table Nr. 3: Entrepreneurship helps women to free themselves from cultural constraints

|    | <b>3. Desire for autonomy from cultural constraints</b>                          | Mean  | Std. Dev. |      |
|----|--|-------|-----------|------|
| 9  | I prefer to work as entrepreneur as I do not like to receive orders from others. | 1.85  | 1.04      |      |
| 10 | Entrepreneurial activity helps women achieve their desire for autonomy           | 2.05  | 1.05      |      |
| 11 | Entrepreneurship helps women to get rid of cultural restrictions.                | 3.10  | 1.17      |      |
| 12 | working outside home reflects my desire for emancipation.                        | 3.30  | 1.26      |      |
|    |  | 10.30 | Mean      | 2.57 |





Table Nr. 4: Being an entrepreneur helps me to have power and respect

|    | <b>4. Desire for power and respect</b>  | Mean | Std. Dev. |      |
|----|---|------|-----------|------|
| 13 | Having my own business has given me more power and authority.                     | 2.60 | 1.31      |      |
| 14 | Many of my acquaintances are approaching me to assistance.                        | 2.25 | 1.07      |      |
| 15 | My social position has improved as result of becoming an entrepreneur.            | 1.95 | 1.32      |      |
| 16 | As a result of becoming entrepreneur, many of my acquaintances ask me for advice. | 1.95 | 0.91      |      |
|    |   | 8.75 | Mean      | 2.19 |

Table Nr. 5: The choice of entrepreneurship as an expression of revolt against male's dominance in the society

|    | <b>5. Revolt against cultural traditions</b>   | Mean  | Std. Dev. |      |
|----|--|-------|-----------|------|
| 17 | The engagement of women in entrepreneurial activities show their revolt against men's domination.      | 3.30  | 1.13      |      |
| 18 | As a result of being an entrepreneur I became free from the inferiority complex                        | 2.65  | 1.09      |      |
| 19 | Entrepreneurship for a woman is an act of insurrection against the cultural traditions of the society. | 3.55  | 1.15      |      |
| 20 | As a woman entrepreneur I feel equal to men.   | 3.15  | 1.39      |      |
|    |  | 12.65 | Mean      | 3.16 |

### Discussions:

The results of the questionnaire counting of 20 women entrepreneurs showed that the majority of women opted for entrepreneurship as a result of a material need, to help the family and because they did not find other work (2.55%).

The results show also that the creation of enterprises, by most women in MINA region, is motivated by the desire to assert themselves, and to allow them to have more power and freedom, in order to be able to face the traditional masculine culture.

Among the reasons behind the choice of entrepreneurship as a profession is the desire for self- confirmation and gives the opportunities to prove their abilities, as important members of the society (1.72%).



Female entrepreneurship is also a means of exercising autonomy and independence in a society of male domination (2.57%). Women in MINA societies in general, hold a secondary position, behind men, and as a reaction to this situation. Because of this reality, women are Motivated to adopt entrepreneurship, and their aspiration is to get power and respect within society (2.19%).

The question to be dealt with in our research is whether the choice of entrepreneurial profession by Algerian women, is an action of revolt against the traditional culture characterized by male domination over the female gender (3.16). Most Algerian entrepreneurs did not agree that this action is a revolt against the local traditions.

The results showed that the most important motivations behind the choices of Algerian women of the entrepreneurial profession is the assertion of themselves. In second place we find the desire for respect and power. The third position is the desire for autonomy and independence.

Moreover, the choice of the entrepreneurial profession remains as a necessity, in order to support their families financially. While the last hypothesis behind the choice of female entrepreneurship in Algeria, which predicted that female entrepreneurship, was a revolt against the traditions of a male culture, was not confirmed.

## **Conclusions**

Entrepreneurship is generally dealt with from an economic point of view, and little consideration is given to the psychological and cultural aspects of women entrepreneurs in the southern countries.

The understanding of women's obstacles and constraints, in MINA Region needs more field research. That helps them to face complex economic, environmental and cultural constraints. The environment and motives of women entrepreneurs in MINA Region and in developing countries in general are different, and need special consideration.

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