

Social Change and Women Entrepreneurship in Algeria



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ABSTRACT

Algerian women had a culture of staying at home, but with the beginning of this century, the Algerian women are holding positions of responsibility. Many of them chose to be entrepreneurs, which demonstrate that the country is living profound social and cultural changes.

The current environment in Algeria promotes access to education and training for girls, but the socio-cultural environment remains a difficult obstacle to overcome for women. Few years ago, to see women as entrepreneurs was inconceivable in a male and conservative society.

Despite the improving economy, Algeria is experiencing a high rate of unemployment, including the young graduates. This motivated the state to adopt a policy of youth employment, by granting them financial facilities, in order to create their own businesses. These factors have encouraged women who graduated to venture into entrepreneurship businesses.

22 female entrepreneurs were interviewed and the impact of social, cultural changes and attitudes in Algerian society were explored.

The results from this study showed that the Algerian society is undergoing big socio-cultural changes and women entrepreneurs became a usual matter in Algeria. In spite of this facts, the majority of them complain of socio-cultural constraints.

The purpose of this paper is to study the socio-cultural changes and constraints of women entrepreneurs in Algeria. It also highlights the support received by them from their families, to confront the constraints of a male society.

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Introduction

After its independence, Algeria inherited a devastated economy, low structures of education and training, as well as the spread of illiteracy and poverty. This led to a backward socio-cultural situation, including the position and role of women in society.

Algeria experienced during the sixties of the 20th century, major changes in political, economic and in the socio-cultural environments. It went through a period of socialism (1962-1988), and then the opening of the market economy as a result of globalization.

The changes have affected methods of work and working culture, especially the work of the women who went from working at home, to doing agriculture on farms, to craftsmanship, to working in managerial positions, to entrepreneurship and holding political responsibilities.

After a period of economic expansion which lasted until the 70s of the 20th century, Algeria has experienced a period of crisis, following the drop in oil prices - the only important resource revenues in foreign currency - and the state was forced to borrow from the World Bank which asked unpopular conditions. This has led to the privatization and closure of several state companies, as well as the dismissal of thousands of workers.

Driven by the huge deficit in job in Algeria and influenced by the success of entrepreneurship strategy in Europe and the United States, Algeria embarked on a strategy to encourage young people to start their own businesses, and participate in the creation of jobs and wealth.

A strategy of entrepreneurship started in late '80s, thanks to liberal economic reforms, entrepreneurship emerged and grew, i.e. 91 % of existing enterprises in 2005 were created after 1990 (Hammouda & Lassassi, 2007) and since, the number of companies continues to increase. "At the end of 2008, the number of private SMEs amounted to 392,013 and more than 126,887 artisans. Indeed, the entrepreneurship became the cornerstone of economic development" (Berreziga & Meziane, 2012, p. 1).

Entrepreneurship has become a strategy for youth employment and socio-economic development. "Small business is poised to acquire a dual legitimacy. Social Firstly, it is related to the factors of self-realization and social integration. And economic, as TPE / PME have been in recent years

spearheaded producing innovations, development of new services and creating jobs" (Tunes, 2003, p. 13).

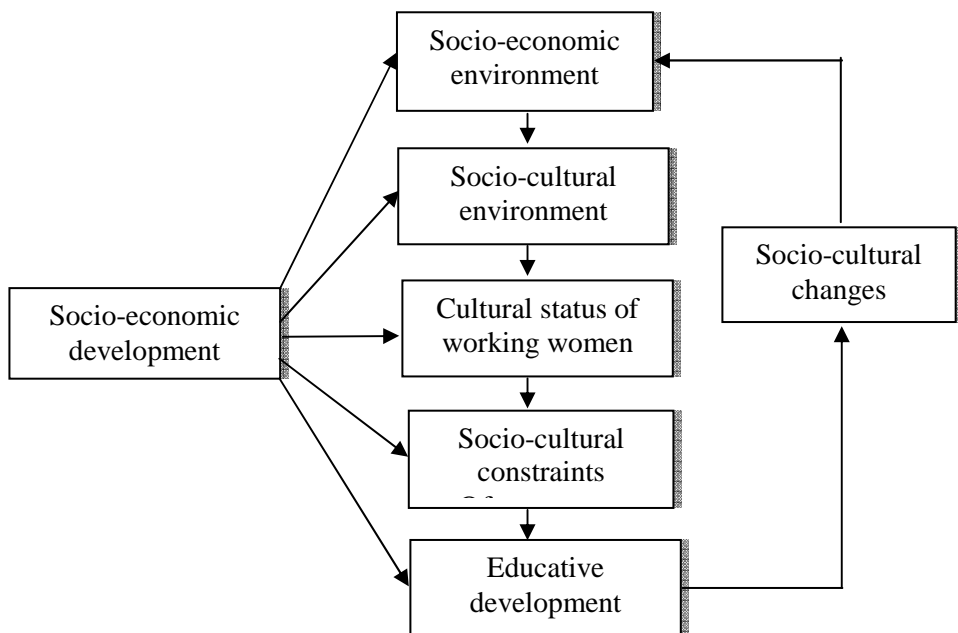
Enterprises managed by young women are generally micro or small, with simple means of production in general, so we registered the absence of pressure for technological change. But the fact that these companies are active in an underdeveloped environment puts them under strong socio-cultural pressures.

The objectives of this study are to illuminate the economic and societal changes and their impacts on the socio-cultural environment, which led to female entrepreneurship activities in Algeria.

Education and social change:

In Algeria, as a developing country, the woman remained in the background in the social and economic life. Salman Al-Abboudi has reported that "in Morocco, women have long been a back plant by traditions and customs value of man in relation to the position of woman and confirmed their superiority over them" (Salman Al-Abboudi, 2012, p.1) . This applies to the Algerian woman since the two countries share the same socio-cultural values, and belong to the Muslim civilization.

Figure 1: Social change and development of entrepreneurial culture



With social, economic and educational development, the status of women has clearly improved, which has allowed the girls to engage in higher education, and move more towards professional activities. As a result of the economic crisis, the deficit of work places and the failure of the government to create more jobs. State structures for youth employment have been created to encourage them to create their own businesses.

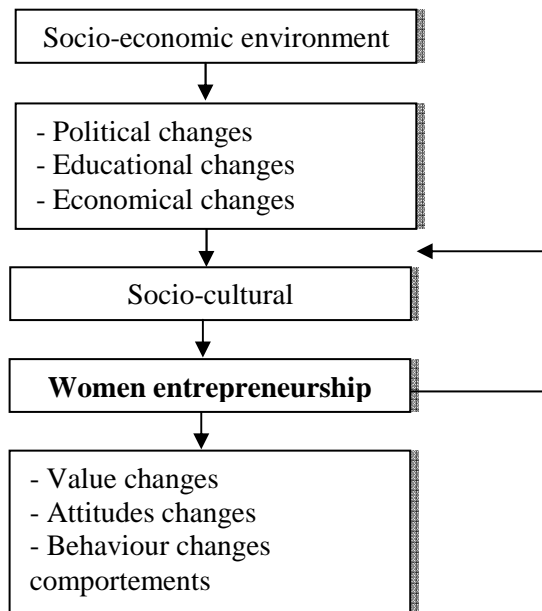
Women entrepreneurship in Algeria:

Algerian society has undergone major social changes, which have accelerated since the eighties of the twentieth century. Algerian legislation regarding education and work, does not discriminate the sexes. As mentioned by Nouara Ja'far, former Associate Minister for the Family: "On the one hand, there is the law that puts men and women on an equal footing. But on the other hand, the disparity between the sexes is still raging on the ground. In fact, it's a problem of mentality" (Belkhiri, 2012).

The fact that the majority of the Algerian university students are female gender, we find that women tend strongly to professional activities.

Despite their entry to entrepreneurial activities, the Algerian women remain attached to their families and socio-cultural values, that often hinder the success and growth of their businesses (Tounés & Assala, 2007).

Figure 2: Change and development of entrepreneurial behaviour



The choice of Algerian women of entrepreneurship as a job is the result of several changes, political, educational and economic.

1. Political changes: Algeria has opted for socialism after its independence, and after the events of October 1988, it opened to multiparty system, which gave more democracy, and to liberal economy which has affected the political, social and economic life environment. The important companies were public and state owned, and private initiatives to create enterprises were not allowed. After that event, and with the political changes, the private initiatives became encouraged.

2. Educational change: Algeria has invested heavily in education, vocational training and higher education. The educational factors had a significant impact on the societal level of instruction, including girls graduating from Algerian universities. This is due to the education policy which has become a requirement and compulsory for all Algerian children without discrimination between genders. This had an impact on the development of training and training needed for the Algerian economy. The girls were found keener on the study, and nowadays most university students are girls, in most fields of study, even those traditionally known as male technical specialties.

3. Economic changes: The availability of financial resources from the hydrocarbon export revenues, and the openness to the market economy encouraged the investments in social and economic infrastructures. Algeria invested heavily in different industrial sectors, such as the petrochemical, mechanical and food industries, in order to meet their consumption needs and to reduce imports.

These changes had an impact on the socio-cultural life, attitudes and behaviours of the young from the two genres, as workers, managers and entrepreneurs, as well as their attitudes towards the work of women in Algeria.

Female entrepreneurship has become obvious, and the engagement in dynamic socio-cultural changes. That is used as a means for gaining more power in their battle for empowerment, in seeking equality between genders in Algerian society.

The economic, educative development of Algeria, as well as the development of the communication technology led to major social changes in culture and attitudes towards the work of women in Algerian society.

In spite of accepting the work of women in different sectors and economic, social and political activities, women are still facing cultural

constraints while carrying out their occupational duties even as managers and entrepreneurs.

Problematic:

Although entrepreneurship is an economic activity open to both sexes, the majority of entrepreneurs are male. Entrepreneurship was related to public works and building, that requires physical force. Consequently, women were not attracted by entrepreneurship professions. The democratization of education and its orientation of women towards scientific and technological fields of study have pushed them to be more and more interested in jobs related to their trainings and scientific backgrounds.

As a result of encouraging youth by the state towards entrepreneurship, women became interested in this profession, traditionally reserved for men. If men in a society of males culture, meet insurmountable difficulties during the process of creating and managing businesses, the case is more complex for women in a traditional and hostile environment.

The social changes, cultures and attitudes towards women creating their enterprises and managing them, and supervising men in a male society, are aspects that need to be highlighted.

Hypotheses:

From the stated problematic, the following hypotheses were put in order to guide our practical research.

1. Algerian society is going through major cultural changes.
2. The educational level of women entrepreneurs is higher than male entrepreneurs.
3. The desire of women to have more power and freedom, are behind the choice of entrepreneurship professions.
4. Women entrepreneurs feel their status improved because of being entrepreneurs.
5. The success of women entrepreneurs in Algeria requires changing attitudes

Methodology:

In order to get data about the impact changes on women entrepreneurship in Algeria, qualitative methods through interviews and quantitative methods through questionnaires were used to collect data about social and cultural changes, and their impacts on managerial practices of women entrepreneurs in Algeria.

Data collection:

A questionnaire was developed and filled in by 22 women entrepreneurs, in order to answer questions about their profiles, their enterprises and their socio-cultural constraints. The following points were explored:

- The educational level of women entrepreneurs.
- Economic activity of parents.
- The motive behind the choice of entrepreneurial business.
- The social perception of the woman entrepreneur.
- The societal acceptability of women as owner and managers of enterprises.
- The feeling of autonomy and independence of women entrepreneurs.

Results:

The data from a sample of 22 women entrepreneurs was analysed, and helped to draw the following conclusions:

Population:

22 questionnaires were filled by women entrepreneurs in the region of Oran. 12 of them are married with children, and 14 of them have a university degree.

Personal Information:

Table 1: Level of instruction

| | Med. school | Secondary | university | Total |
|----------------------|-------------|-----------|------------|-------|
| Level of instruction | 01 | 07 | 14 | 22 |
| % | 4.54 % | 31.81 % | 63.00 % | 100 % |

Following Table 1, the majority of women entrepreneurs (63%) have a university degree.

Table 2: Marital status and ages of the sample:

| Age | Marital Status | | | | |
|-------------|----------------|---------|----|--------|----|
| | Single | Married | | Total | |
| 20 - 30 | 04 | 18.18% | 02 | 09.09% | 06 |
| 31- 40 | 04 | 18.18% | 05 | 22.72% | 09 |
| 41- 50 | 01 | 04.54% | 03 | 13.64% | 04 |
| 51 and more | 00 | 00 % | 03 | 13.64% | 03 |
| Total | 09 | 40.90 % | 13 | 59.09% | 22 |

The majority members of the sample, as indicated in Table 2, are between 20 and 40 years; and 54.54% of them are married.

Information about the enterprise:

Table 3: Main motivation behind the choice of professional activity:

| 1 | Reason for choice of the activity | H.craft | Services | Indust | Pub.eng | total |
|---|-----------------------------------|---------|----------|--------|---------|-------|
| 2 | The activity of a family member | 02 | 04 | 02 | 00 | 08 |
| 3 | Personal tendencies | 01 | 03 | 01 | 01 | 06 |
| 4 | The field of study | 00 | 04 | 00 | 01 | 05 |
| 5 | Activity of husband | 00 | 00 | 01 | 01 | 02 |
| 6 | Field for profit | 00 | 00 | 01 | 00 | 01 |
| | Total | 03 | 11 | 05 | 03 | 22 |

The majority of enterprises in the sample (Table 3) are in services, followed by industry.

Table 4: Lifetime of the enterprise:

| Years in Business | Number of workers | | | | total |
|--------------------|-------------------|-------|---------|---------|-------|
| | 2-9 | 10-19 | 20 – 29 | More/30 | |
| less than 5 years | 05 | 05 | 01 | 00 | 11 |
| 5 -10 | 03 | 01 | 00 | 01 | 05 |
| 11-15 | 01 | 00 | 01 | 00 | 02 |
| More than 15 years | 03 | 00 | 00 | 01 | 04 |
| Total | 12 | 06 | 02 | 02 | 22 |

The majority of businesses concerned by the study are small, newly created (under 5 years) and with a number of workers between (2 and 9) workers.

Table 5: The socio-cultural constraints of women entrepreneurs in Algeria.

| | | Oui | % | Non | % | Parfois | % |
|----|---|-----|--------------|-----|--------------|---------|--------------|
| 1 | My employees are receptive to my instructions. | 16 | 72.72 | 02 | 09.09 | 04 | 18.18 |
| 2 | I have no difficulty communicating with men subordinates. | 15 | 68.18 | 01 | 04.54 | 06 | 27.27 |
| 3 | My status has improved with respect to the society after creating my business. | 15 | 68.18 | 04 | 18.18 | 03 | 13.63 |
| 4 | My success is not due to the fact that I am a woman. | 14 | 63.63 | 06 | 27.27 | 02 | 09.09 |
| 5 | To have successful women entrepreneurship requires radical change of attitudes. | 12 | 54.54 | 07 | 31.81 | 03 | 13.63 |
| 6 | Men workers accept easily to be managed by a woman. | 12 | 54.54 | 04 | 18.18 | 06 | 27.27 |
| 7 | There is a competition between women entrepreneurs. | 11 | 50.00 | 03 | 13.63 | 08 | 36.36 |
| 8 | Harassment of men does not bother me. | 11 | 50.00 | 05 | 22.72 | 07 | 31.81 |
| 9 | There is a jealousy between women entrepreneurs. | 11 | 50.00 | 03 | 13.63 | 08 | 36.36 |
| 10 | My competitors are jealous of me, because I am a successful woman. | 11 | 50.00 | 07 | 31.81 | 04 | 18.18 |
| 11 | The fact that I am a woman does not pose any problems for my business. | 10 | 45.45 | 04 | 18.18 | 08 | 36.36 |
| 12 | I have difficulties in communicating with my women subordinates. | 10 | 45.45 | 10 | 45.45 | 02 | 09.09 |
| 13 | The perception of male entrepreneurs about women entrepreneurs is significantly negative. | 09 | 40.90 | 06 | 27.27 | 07 | 31.81 |
| 14 | There is a cooperation between women entrepreneurs. | 09 | 40.90 | 07 | 31.81 | 06 | 27.27 |
| 15 | The Algerian society perceives positively the position of women as entrepreneurs. | 08 | 36.36 | 07 | 31.81 | 07 | 31.81 |
| 16 | I prefer to deal with women entrepreneurs. | 07 | 31.81 | 08 | 36.36 | 07 | 31.81 |

The results in table 6, showed the impacts of traditional culture on the managerial behaviour of women entrepreneurs.

Discussions

Despite the growing number of women entrepreneurs in Algeria, there is a lack of field researches in this aspect. The following discussion presents the results in relation to the observations of everyday life, and responses from interviews with women entrepreneurs. These results are compared with other research in the Maghreb and the Arab-Muslim countries in general (Rachdi, 2006; Kilani, 1998).

The majority of women entrepreneurs have a college degree. Their instruction levels are higher than that of their parents. This explains why changes experienced by the Algerian society.

To a question about the motivation behind the choice of entrepreneurship business, the majority of women responded that they tend to have more power and freedom, and more consideration in society. They feel their status improved socially because they became entrepreneurs.

Despite the socio-cultural development of Algerian society, much of the Algerians resist, and do not accept to see women as entrepreneurs, which makes it more difficult to manage men. Despite their success in managing their enterprises, most women entrepreneurs expressed the need for a change in mentality for the success of female entrepreneurship.

Despite the social change that took place during the last few decades, the majority of women entrepreneurs face socio-cultural constraints from their environments.

The major problems of women entrepreneurs come from the attitudes of employees within their own enterprises and the socio-cultural environment. These cultural issues are related to many aspects of day to day life, as well as the human relations and managerial practices, as shown in Table 5.

Regarding the perception of the women entrepreneurs by the society, 15 women stated that their status was improved after the creation of their own businesses, but only 8 responses found that the society regarded positively the position of the women entrepreneurs.

Among the socio-cultural issues, there is a high level of communication between genders. 15 responses indicated that they found no

difficulty in communicating with their men subordinates. To another question, 10 women entrepreneurs responded that they had problems in communicating with their women subordinates.

Regarding the fact of being managed by a woman, 12 responses (54.54%), have shown that employees accept to be supervised by women, and the majority of women entrepreneurs (16), responded that employees were receptive to their directives. It is obvious that subordinates in enterprises managed by women to accept this fact, because those who do not accept refuse to work in these enterprises, and choose to work with men entrepreneurs.

Among the cultural factors that influence the behaviour of women entrepreneurs, we find competition, cooperation and jealousy. Half of the women entrepreneurs (50.00%) found that there was a competition between women entrepreneurs. On another question, 50% found that their competitors were jealous of them. The same number of entrepreneurs (11) found that there was jealousy between women entrepreneurs.

In response to the question concerning the cooperation between women entrepreneurs (49.90 %) responded that there was cooperation, and (31.81% answered no to this question. Asked "if they prefer to deal with women entrepreneurs' 07 of them, that was (31.81%) answered yes, and (36.36%) prefer not to deal with women entrepreneurs.

Regarding cooperation between men and women entrepreneurs, 9 responses (40.90%) found that the perception of men towards women entrepreneurs was significantly negative, and (50.00%) found that they were not disturbed by men's harassment.

To a question, whether their success is due to being women, the majority of women entrepreneurs (63.63%) responded that they did not think, that being a woman has an impact on their professional accomplishments; and (45.45%) responded that they did not see their problems at work, were due to the facts that they are women.

Finally, 11 women (50.00%) consider that the success of women entrepreneurs requires a radical change in the attitudes of people in Algerian society. Different responses show that women entrepreneurs face socio-cultural constraints, as a result to attitudes, behaviors and practices of people in a male society.

Women entrepreneurs in Algeria and in the Maghreb in general, are related to their culture, and cannot be dissociated from their Arab-Muslim identity. If the working conditions of Algerian women have changed

dramatically, "the attitudes and perceptions of society have not sufficiently evolved" (Salman et al., 2012, p. 3).

Female entrepreneurship is not just an economic activity, employment or a way out of unemployment crisis, but a means of emancipation of women, expanding their power and freedom. Female entrepreneurship is helping to change men/women relationships and the revolt of the latter against the traditional culture of submission in a male society. But that does not happen without social resistance, especially from men, defending their advantages, relying on moral and traditional values of the society.

Conclusions

Despite the efforts of the state in the field of training and media areas, and despite the changes and socio-cultural developments experienced by Algerian society, changes in attitudes require more time and effort to raise awareness about a new culture of genres.

Few field studies were conducted in Algeria to study the socio-cultural change and its impact on the attitudes and behaviors of women entrepreneurs in a traditional Arab-Muslim male environment. There is a lack of literature that focuses on the role of female entrepreneurship in the expansion of freedom, power and empowerment of women. This study contributes to bridge the scientific gap in women's entrepreneurship in the Arab countries in general and in Algeria in particular.

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Društvene promene i žensko preduzetništvo u Alžiru

APSTRAKT

Žene u Alžiru su bile deo kulture gde su one ostajale kući i nisu radile, ali sa početkom ovog veka, žene u Alžiru se nalaze na odgovornim položajima. Mnoge od njih su izabrale da budu preduzetnice, što pokazuje da zemlja prolazi kroz duboke društvene i kulturne promene.

Trenutno okruženje u Alžiru promovise pristup obrazovanju devojčica, ali ipak društveno kulturološko okruženje ostaje jedna teška prepreka preko koje žene Alžira moraju preći. Pre par godina, bilo je nezamislivo videti ženu preduzeticu u muškom i konzervativnom društvu.

Uprkos ekonomiji koja je u razvoju, Alžir se suočava sa visokim stopama nezaposlenosti, uključujući i mlade koji su visoko obrazovani. Ovo je bila motivacija za državu da usvoji propise za zaposlenje mladih, odobravajući im finansijske olakšice da bi pokrenuli svoj biznis. Ovi faktori su ohrabрили žene koje su visoko obrazovane da se upuste u preduzetništvo. Intervjuisali smo 22 žene preduzetnice i istražili uticaj društvenih i kulturoloških promena i stavova na alžirsko društvo.

Rezultati istraživanja su pokazali da alžirsko društvo prolazi kroz velike društvene i kulturološke promene i da žene preduzetnice postaju uobičajena pojava u Alžiru. Uprkos ovim činjenicama, većina njih se žali na društveno kulturološka ograničenja.

Cilj ovog rada jeste da prouči društveno kulturološke promene i ograničenja za žene preduzetnice u Alžiru. On takođe naglašava podršku koju žene dobijaju od svojih porodica u suočavanju sa preprekama muškog društva.

KLJUČNE REČI: *žensko preduzetništvo, društveno kulturološke promene, pol i rad*

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