



Linking female entrepreneurs' motivation to business survival[☆]



Andrea Rey-Martí^a, Ana Tur Porcar^b, Alicia Mas-Tur^{a,*}

^a Universitat de València, Departamento de Dirección de Empresas, Avenida Tarongers, S/N, 46022 Valencia, Spain

^b Universitat de València, Departamento de Psicología Básica, Blasco Ibañez, 46010 Valencia, Spain

ARTICLE INFO

Available online 11 December 2014

Keywords:

Female entrepreneurship
Entrepreneurial motivation
Crisp set QCA
Survival

ABSTRACT

Analysis of entrepreneurs' motives in the framework of organizational behavior theory is a popular research area regarding female entrepreneurship. This study analyzes women entrepreneurs' motives (propensity for risk, finding a work–life balance, desire to develop business skills, need to seek self-employment, and desire to earn more than in paid employment) to achieve survival of their businesses through crisp set qualitative comparative analysis (csQCA). Analysis yields the following results: 1) women whose motive is to pursue a better work–life balance are less likely to success; and 2) women whose motive is risk-taking are more likely to success.

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1. Introduction

Since the eighties, scholars are studying differences between female and male entrepreneurs (Carter & Rosa, 1998; Hisrich & Brush, 1987; Huang, Mas-Tur, & Yu, 2012; Stevenson, 1990). These studies reveal differences in business characteristics, motives of entrepreneurial endeavor, evaluations of main barriers to starting and maintaining entrepreneurial activities, personality traits, management style, and business sector.

These differences justify the separation of female entrepreneurship study from that of standard entrepreneurship theory, whose research compares businesswomen and businessmen. Scholars often criticize using men's value systems, mindsets, and behavioral patterns when studying businesswomen (Andersén, 2011; Boden & Nucci, 2000).

Scholars of female business activity have special interest in the motives that drive individuals to create businesses or embark on some form of entrepreneurial venture. Nevertheless, most studies are merely exploratory, and fail to uncover motives driving women entrepreneurs. In fact, findings are contradictory (Gill & Ganesh, 2007).

As men, women conduct entrepreneurial activity for many reasons (Akehurst, Simarro, & Mas-Tur, 2012). This study examines the role of five key motives that drive women to create businesses: propensity for risk, finding a work–life balance, desire to develop business skills, need to seek self-employment, and desire to earn more than in paid employment.

[☆] The authors are grateful to contributions from Domingo Ribeiro-Soriano, Norat Roig-Tierno and César Guzman for their assistance with methodology and to Kun-Huang Huang for his efforts in revising the study. The authors alone are responsible for all limitations and errors that may relate to the study and the study.

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: andrea.rey@uv.es (A. Rey-Martí), ana.tur@uv.es (A. Tur Porcar), alicia.mas@uv.es (A. Mas-Tur).

The study observes which motives have a relationship with business success. For this purpose, the study deploys crisp set QCA (Ragin, 1987). This methodology resolves a major limitation of probabilistic techniques—minimum sample size—without restricting the study sample. Even studies analyzing small data samples can yield conclusions and implications extensible to a wide population.

This study has the following structure: Section 2 presents literature review on women entrepreneurs' motives, particularly on those that sustain the subsequent empirical study. Section 3 details the method for empirical study and highlights its suitability for a study of this kind. Section 4 presents results. Section 5 contains conclusions and implications of the study.

2. Theoretical framework: business expansion and female entrepreneurs' motives

In recent years, several studies (Arendt & Brettel, 2010) are showing that business expansion predominantly depends on business owners' motives, attitudes, and intentions towards the future. These findings imply a link between the small size of women-led businesses and women's attitudes regarding business growth (Du Rietz & Henrekson, 2000) with scholars concluding that these attitudes differ from those of men. These studies highlight entrepreneurs' desire for their businesses to grow, although motives driving men and women differ.

The remainder of this section presents a summary of motives that drive women to launch businesses, and these motives' relationship with business success.

2.1. Business expansion and propensity for risk

Although gender differences in propensity for business risk do not always exist (Ullah, Abbas, & Akbar, 2010), this propensity is generally lower among women (Schwartz, 1976; Smolarski & Kut, 2011) than

among men. Thus, women's risk aversion, lack of faith in own abilities, and desire of a suitable work–life balance obviously limit women's decisions to expand their businesses. Businesswomen value more than men the risk of expanding a business quickly, which makes them adopt a longer-term growth model. The reason for women to do so is to reduce business size such that managing and controlling business are compatible with their knowledge and skills, ability to obtain resources, and desire to balance professional and personal life (Aspara, Lamberg, Laukia, & Tikkanen, 2011).

Factors above highlight the impact of discrimination against women in working environment and personal sphere. Despite progresses towards equality, women feel that they have to take care of family and housework. Women report that owning a business allows them to assume risks and assess their working style, or to break through the so-called glass ceiling (Akehurst et al., 2012; Scott, 1986). Women who leave employs in other businesses to own one display an ambition for self-realization goals (Walker, Webster, & Bianchi, 2011).

Women's decisions to own businesses involve a complex process consisting of influences from personality and aspirations. Therefore, women who start businesses are demonstrating themselves whether they can overcome this challenge. Thus, many authors state that women feel that owning a business grants them more freedom to take risks and define their work style (Bennett & Dann, 2000).

Proposition 1. For women entrepreneurs, risk propensity has a relationship with business survival.

2.2. Business expansion and achieving a work–life balance

Studies indicate a direct relationship between marital status, entrepreneurial motivation, and business activity (DeMartino & Barbato, 2003; Hinz, 2004). However, Carter and Rosa (1998) state that businesses are more successful when owners avoid involving family in business.

Motivations for having children—and the number thereof—have a relationship with business activity (DeMartino & Barbato, 2003). However, Carter and Rosa (1998) claim that having young children does not affect entrepreneurial activity. Conversely, Kevane and Wydick (2001) find that having children—and other family obligations like caring for elderly and young family members—negatively affects creating and growing businesses due to the time caring for children requires.

Proposition 2. For women entrepreneurs, the motivation to fit family into working life has a relationship with business survival likelihood.

2.3. Business expansion and desire to develop entrepreneurial skills

Entrepreneurship literature examining women entrepreneurs' level of education and training yields contradictory results. In most studies (Hisrich & Brush, 1987) authors conclude that female business owners have better standard training than average members of population including male business owners (Cowling & Taylor, 2001).

Verheul and Thurik (2001) consider those business owners' levels of education and training equal for both sexes, and the differences lay in training type and quality. Lee and Rogoll (1997) state that female business owners hold a higher education level, and that they express satisfaction with their education, despite acknowledging that education type and quality have some significant disadvantages. Even still, this question draws a range of opinions. Certain researchers (Krasniqi, 2010) claim that productivity of male business owners' training is greater than that of women. The reasoning is that women often opt for liberal arts or humanities, whereas male tend to technical or business subjects. Other authors (Boden & Nucci, 2000) cannot find statistically significant differences regarding specialist training in marketing, accounting, finance, business strategy, or human resources.

Carter and Rosa (1998) and Boden and Nucci (2000) claim that education and training do not affect business performance of men- and women-led businesses. Nevertheless, wide training may help young female entrepreneurs understand certain key historical or economic situations, helping them make important decisions during crisis periods. Shane and Venkataraman (2000) indicate that women with specialist business training have greater, better vision toward achieving profits.

Proposition 3. For women entrepreneurs, a motivation to develop entrepreneurial skills has a relationship with business survival.

2.4. Business expansion and need for self-employment

Literature presents two common motives driving women to create businesses. These motives are self-employment and engaging in entrepreneurial activity as an alternative to unemployment (Humphreys & McClung, 1981; Visscher & Visscher-Voerman, 2010). These factors may derive from a higher level of women unemployment than that of men. Higher unemployment rate is mainly due to women's discrimination and segregation in labor market, which may limit women's professional development in large organizations.

Necessity is one reason for starting businesses (Chan & Foster, 2001). Chu and Siu (1993) assert that working in self-employment from home increases work opportunities for women. Working from home in self-employment is due to a lack of job security and/or low income when working in paid employment.

For women, creating a business may be a form of avoiding unemployment and, in some countries, a way of overcoming poverty (Dhaliwall, 1998). Mroczkowski (1997) cites work–life balance as the greatest hurdle to starting a business. Conversely, scholars agree that this factor is an encouraging element for women to start businesses.

Because of this need for alternatives to unemployment, many female business owners opt to create businesses that they can integrate into their lives rather than viewing their business as entrepreneurial careers. Women's families are part of the business since they affect business decisions (Akehurst et al., 2012).

Proposition 4. For women entrepreneurs, the motivation of unemployment opportunities has a relationship with business survival.

2.5. Business expansion and desire for greater income

Women's income being lower than men's is also a driver of women entrepreneurship (Welsh, 2014). Chu and Siu (1993) highlight that self-employment from home provides women with work opportunities, since they do not suffer a lack of job security and low income of paid employment. Women entrepreneurship growth is especially high in wealthy nations with strong income streams for businesses, especially in sectors where medium- and long-term income is high, such as technological sectors (Delmar & Davidsson, 2000).

Thus, economic context affects the launch and development of businesses (Arendt & Brettel, 2010). Data reveal a difference between men and women with medium-level income. Men's motivation involves necessity, while woman's involves opportunity. This difference derives from men with medium-level incomes acting as breadwinners for family. Women, who experience less social pressure in this sense, can seek opportunities to boost family income (Huang et al., 2012).

Proposition 5. For women entrepreneurs, the motive of increasing income has a relationship with business survival.

3. Method

Data contains a sample of 35 women-led service firms in the Region of Valencia. Data collection takes place in 2011 through a survey of

women entrepreneurs. Data are especially useful for this study for several reasons. First, scholars commonly acknowledge that certain business sectors have a greater women presence in senior management positions (Blum, Fields, & Goodman, 1994). Numerous authors (Brush, 1992; ENSR, 1996; Hisrich & Brush, 1987; Miskin & Rose, 1990; Scott, 1986) highlight that women-led businesses usually belong to services sector, especially to activities where women traditionally have a greater presence: retail, hospitality, personal assistance services, and education. Second, in other sectors such as manufacturing, women are underrepresented (Du Rietz & Henrekson, 2000). Other authors (Anna, Chandler, Jansen, & Mero, 2000; Loscocco, 1991) indicate that businesswomen are less likely to own businesses in highly technological sectors.

3.1. QCA methodology

Fields such as marketing, strategic management, organizational change, human resource management, and resource-based view (RBV), use configurational comparative methods to complement incomplete results from previous studies' statistical analyses (Fiss, 2007; Hsu, Woodside, & Marshall, 2013; Ketchen & Palmer, 1999; Pajunen, 2008; Woodside, 2013, 2014). A configurational comparative method assumes complex causality—a condition or combination of conditions that is minimally necessary and/or sufficient for an outcome—and non-linear relationships where, “variables found to be causally related in one configuration may be unrelated or even inversely related in another” (Meyer, Tsui, & Hinings, 1993, p. 1178). This method describes how “a system can reach the same final state, from different initial conditions and by a variety of different [or multiple] paths” (Katz & Kahn, 1978, p. 30) to an outcome. Statements about causal relations are asymmetrical (Ragin, 2000). Configurational comparative method is an attractive technique to work with a few cases, since it lacks the imitations of other studies (Fiss, 2011; Lijphart, 1971). Although configurational comparative method origin is to tackle small-N data sets (e.g., between 10 and 50 cases) (Fiss, 2007, p. 1194), they are also relevant for larger samples (Fiss, 2011; Ragin, 1987, 2006).

4. Results

Table 2 shows csQCA analysis parsimonious solution. Each row represents a configuration of causal conditions. For each configuration, Table 2 shows raw and unique coverage, and consistency. Figures at the foot of the table represent coverage and consistency of the solution as a whole. Intermediate solution represents an alternative solution of intermediate complexity, assuming that only some causal configurations that empirical data fail to capture result in the outcome (e.g., business survival). Drawing on previous literature review, Table 1 contains a summary of variables under study.

The model for this study is the following:

$$\text{super_cs} = f(\text{compat_cs}, \text{diffic_cs}, \text{inc_cs}, \text{capac_cs}, \text{risk_cs})$$

According to analysis results, the solution yields a coverage of 70% and a consistency of 100%.

Table 1
Definition of variables.

Conditions	Symbol	Items
Outcome	Surv	Increase in turnover and number of employees of businesses created by women in the last 5 years.
Antecedent conditions	Compat	Seeking an easier way of balancing work with caring for the family.
	Diffic	Difficulties in finding another job and a need to earn a living.
	Inc	The chance to earn greater income than in other paid jobs.
	Capac	Seeking to develop business skills and capabilities.
	Risk	Seeking to assume risk and take on challenges in the business world.

Table 2
csQCA output: intermediate solution for survival.

	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency
~diffic_cs* ~ capac_cs*risk_cs	0.130435	0.130435	1.000000
~compat_cs*diffic_cs*inc_cs	0.086957	0.086957	1.000000
~compat_cs*diffic_cs*capac_cs	0.086957	0.086957	1.000000
~compat_cs*inc_cs*risk_cs	0.043478	0.043478	1.000000
~compat_cs* ~ diffic_cs* ~ incs_cs* ~ risk_cs	0.043478	0.043478	1.000000
compat_cs* ~ diffic_cs*inc_cs*risk_cs	0.217391	0.217391	1.000000
diffic_cs*inc_cs*capac_cs*risk_cs	0.086957	0.086957	1.000000

Solution coverage: 0.695652.
Solution consistency: 1.000000.

The first configuration, ~diffic_cs* ~ capac_cs*risk_cs (where “~” means “absence of” and “*” means “and”), has a substantial unique coverage (0.13). This solution establishes that the following factor combination leads to success for women entrepreneurs: absence of motives relating to difficulties in finding other work and intentions to develop business skills, and presence of motivations of risk propensity. Therefore, consistent with literature, woman entrepreneurs who seek to assume risks when creating businesses and whose motivation is not merely a desire for self-employment can expect their businesses to survive in the medium term (Ward, 2007). Along with this first configuration, a second combination of variables, compat_cs* ~ diffic_cs*inc_cs*risk_cs, displays a high unique coverage (0.21). Once again, risk is a key explanatory motive for business success.

To complement the first stage of analysis, a second stage examines variables that affect non-survival of women-led businesses. The first step is to add the variable non-survival (i.e., absence of survival) to data set. The assumption for determining causes of non-survival is that motives leading to this new outcome are the opposite of those leading to first stage analysis outcome.

Table 3 shows analysis results, which are identical for all three solutions (complex, intermediate, and parsimonious).

Results are coherent with the first stage of analysis and literature findings. In this second stage of analysis, results show that a single configuration explains 33% of survival of women-led enterprises that shape the sample. Configuration, ~risk_cs* ~ inc_cs*compat_cs, represents absence of motives deriving from seeking risk and greater income, along with presence of motives deriving from pursuing a work–life balance. Combining these factors leads to non-survival of the firm in the medium-term.

5. Conclusions

This study analyzes women entrepreneurs' motives and their relation to business survival. Recent literature on women's motives for creating businesses provides the theoretical framework for this study. CsQCA (Ragin, 1987) of empirical data sheds light on key motives for survival, and non-survival, of women-led businesses.

QCA is a comparative analysis tool that analyzes causal relations between a set of variables within a certain context. This technique overcomes a major limitation of conventional probabilistic analysis techniques (need to work with large samples), making results extensible for a wide population, although the study contains only a few cases.

Table 3
csQCA output: intermediate solution for non-survival.

	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency
~risk_cs* ~ inc_cs*compat_cs	0.333333	0.333333	1.000000

Solution coverage: 0.333333.

Solution consistency: 1.000000.

QCA optimally performs complex analysis of causal relationships in contexts where researchers work with medium-sized samples. The reasons are: 1) they only have a few observations, or 2) because target population is naturally small (Eng & Woodside, 2012).

Results are coherent with findings arising from literature review. In particular, two motives seem to have a special relationship with a firm's likelihood of survival. The first is women entrepreneurs' propensity for risk. Results show that configurations with this factor have a positive relationship with business success. The second is the need to strike a work–life balance. This motive seems to have a positive relationship with non-survival and a negative relationship with business success. In other words, women who decide to launch a business because they seek to combine work and family commitments have lower chances of achieving medium-term business survival. In contrast, if their motive is to assume business risks, their success rate is higher.

These results have significant implications for women entrepreneurship, especially during crises. Many women create businesses because of unsuitable motives, which may be the reason why these enterprises cannot establish themselves in the medium term. This study shows that women's entrepreneurial motivations relating to business concepts (such as risk propensity) instead of family concerns (such as work life balance) make business survival likelihood much greater.

This study has some limitations, which present opportunities for future research. First, in the Region of Valencia, economy consists predominantly of small and medium enterprises in traditional sectors such as furniture, ceramics, textiles and toy manufacturing. Industry distribution is also unequal across the region. Therefore, these results cannot be extensible to regions with different characteristics from those of the Region of Valencia. This limitation presents an invitation to scholars to perform an interregional comparison using this study's results. Second, this study employs csQCA because of variable limitations. An extension of this research may seek to use fuzzy set QCA to enrich current findings. While conventional QCA depends exclusively on binary variables, fuzzy set QCA permits the study of categorical and scale variables, thereby combining main advantages of quantitative and qualitative research approaches.

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