

Chapter 4

Female Entrepreneurship in Portugal: Case Study for Micro-Companies in the Northern of Portugal

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ABSTRACT

Entrepreneurship is an increasingly studied international phenomenon, often being understood as a way of creating jobs and boosting economic growth, development, and innovation. This chapter aims to take on the problem related to gender and entrepreneurship in the Portuguese society. The goal is to explain the concept of entrepreneur, behavioral, and social differences between the masculine and the feminine gender as entrepreneurs and identify Portuguese female entrepreneurs. A qualitative, multiple case studies methodology is applied to the sample of eight Portuguese female entrepreneurs, the data collection instrument being the semi-structured interview. Regarding the obtained results, it can be stated that the majority of the interviewees has entrepreneurs in the family, the father being the most mentioned figure as booster of entrepreneur activity. The wish for personal realization and independence are the main factors that motivated self-employment. No entrepreneur felt any discrimination or gender inequality as a female entrepreneur.

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INTRODUCTION

The tertiarization of the economies, the decentralization of the value chain on a global level and the introduction of new technologies have translated into a reduction of the number of workers and a rise in precarious, temporary and partial employment. Thus, aspects such as labour stability and lifelong employment have become less and less common to many individuals. A category of workers emerges, without labour stability and with a very precarious perspective towards the future, and who look for alternative ways to create employment and family subsistence.

Entrepreneurship is a rising professional category that arose as an alternative way of creating a job position and of social inclusion due to the large social inequalities that one sees in the job market.

In Portugal, there is a growing number of entrepreneurs who look to seize a business opportunity, hand in hand with those who became entrepreneurs because they could not find a better job opportunity (GEM, 2012).

Entrepreneurship has a very differentiated scope of interpretations, although there are some aspects which are common to all authors, connecting it to innovation or creation. According to Robbins (2001), entrepreneurship is a way for individuals to look for opportunities, organising the resources they need and, through innovation, open their own business, without fear of taking on their risks and possible rewards, satisfying their needs and wants.

The different concepts and definitions of entrepreneurship do not distinguish between gender, as entrepreneur features can be found in both men and women, although the first definitions are mainly directed at the masculine gender. However, literature on the gender influence on entrepreneurship supports that men are in bigger number at the beginning of activities (Langowitz & Minniti, 2007; McKay, Phillimore & Teasdale, 2010; Singer, Amoros & Moska, 2015; Themudo, 2009).

Studies demonstrated that there has been a growing increase in entrepreneur women in the last years. However, comparing men and women's participation in the job market is not an easy task. Murani (2003) claims that the growth of female participation in the working world is real, still holding, however, several issues and constraints connected to inequality and precariousness. Delors (1996) mentions that "inequalities are, in fact, at the root of the permanent inferiorities that weigh on women through their lives"; Eagly (1987) ran in accordance, pinpointing how difficult it is for women to have an entrepreneur activity and also be responsible for domestic chores, for raising children and for supporting the elderly.

Even today, women continue to be vulnerable to attitudes and behaviours of discrimination such as inequality in remuneration, difficulty on integrating or reintegrating into the job market, limited access to progression in their career and other resources. Although women have on average higher levels of qualification

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