

Chapter 18

Women's Self-Perception of Opportunities and Challenges for Entrepreneurship

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ABSTRACT

The figure of the woman, in the business context, has been gaining strength and space, being perceptible its rise in the entrepreneurship, over the last decades. However, this space is still predominantly male, making it harder for women to join this environment. With this in view, several researches propose to study the entrepreneurship of women, however, with a lack of feminist perspective. In this sense, this chapter aims to analyze the self-perception of female students of the course of business administration on their possibilities and challenges of acting as entrepreneurs. This research uses interviews with young women students of a course of business administration as a data, under a qualitative approach and analytical treatment. As a result, it was found that, from the interviewees' perspective, women still have their entrepreneurial ascendancy restricted mainly by prejudice and male discrimination still in force, although they believe that little by little this reality has changed.

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INTRODUCTION

The current success of the discourse on the economic fields of entrepreneurship is determined by the trust placed in the entrepreneurial activity as a generator of innovation, creativity, growth and employment (García & Capitán, 2016). Following this logic, Rubion-Banon and Esteban-Lloret (2016) explain that entrepreneurship is considered a source of economic development, innovation and growth. However, this activity is still predominantly male, as Cabrera and Mauricio (2017) reports, despite the significant contribution of women to economic growth and social well-being, and their progress in the field of entrepreneurship over the last decades, participation in the business world is still lower than that of men.

Understanding the role played by social, cultural and economic factors of entrepreneurship is fundamental to understanding how to encourage entrepreneurial culture and behavior (Amentie & Negash, 2015; Rubion-Banon & Esteban-Lloret, 2016). Regarding the decision to undertake a new business, Moreno (2016) shows that this is related to the attitude of human beings, who seek to be innovative and this positively impact their lives and the communities in which they operate. In this way, entrepreneurship is seen as the action of an individual that has specific characteristics, which ends up being considered the sole responsible for success in business (Ferreira & Nogueira, 2013). Thus, according to Henry, Orser, Coleman & Foss (2017) the characteristics of the entrepreneur are faced with some specific challenges, which may indicate the need to generate specific policies as in the case of women entrepreneurs.

In this way, to support the development of entrepreneurship, especially in women entrepreneurship, Pérez-Pérez and Avilés-Hernández (2016) argue that policies that facilitate work and family reconciliation are also necessary, since the unequal responsibilities between men and prevent (or block) their entrepreneurship. According to the authors, research on entrepreneurship from a gender perspective reveals significant differences not only between the levels of participation of men and women in business, but also between the orientations, motives and business opportunities for both. In this perspective, the authors argue that the lack of entrepreneurial culture and social support largely influences female entrepreneurship, with education and training playing a key role.

In addition, Cabrera and Mauricio (2017) report that, together with basic entrepreneurial skills, women's **self-perception** is a relevant factor in this environment. It is perceived, then, that the entrepreneurship of women is in evidence, due to the process of inclusion of gender of the labor market, and occurs from a gradual increase of enterprises organized by women, becoming increasingly important to know importance in the economic scenario. In addition, the reasons women have to be an entrepreneur are relevant in this context, coupled with the particularities of women entrepreneurship (Amorim & Batista, 2012).

For Mesquita, Matos and Rechene (2018, p. 22), there are indications that "the negative self-perception of women in relation to the possibilities of development of their companies, their self-efficacy and their intentions" act as determining factors in gender differences presented in the theme of entrepreneurship for women, presenting as a consequence their reduced participation in entrepreneurial activities. This chapter aims to analyze the self-perception of female business management students about their possibilities and challenges as entrepreneurs.

The chapter presents as results an overview of the entrepreneurship of women with a specific focus on the self-perception of women on entrepreneurship. That is, how these young women, bachelor's degree students in business administration, who will enter the labor market, visualize their future possibilities in the area of entrepreneurship from the empirical results of a field research developed. In addition, the text of the chapter, in line with the proposed objective, addresses the theme of women entrepreneurship at the international level, and how their difficulties and prejudices in this area are addressed in the aca-

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