

SESSION: GENERAL ISSUES OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

GENDER DIFFERENCES IN ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTIONS: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF DEMOGRAPHIC INFLUENCES

Panagiota I. Xanthopoulou^{*}, Vassilis Vytas^{**},
Alexandros G. Sahinidis^{*}, Ioannis Antoniadis^{***}

^{*} Department of Business Administration, University of West Attica, Athens, Greece

^{**} Department of Business Administration, Neapolis University of Pafos, Pafos, Cyprus

^{***} Department of Management Science and Technology,
University of Western Macedonia, Kozani, Greece



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Abstract

Entrepreneurship is increasingly recognized as a critical driver of economic development, job creation, and innovation. Recent research has shown that individual demographic factors, particularly gender and family background, play an influential role in shaping entrepreneurial intentions. This study aims to explore the effects of various demographic variables, including gender, age, and the father's occupation, on entrepreneurial intentions. Furthermore, it seeks to identify how family support, particularly from entrepreneurial fathers, impacts individuals' motivations to pursue entrepreneurship. This paper provides a comprehensive analysis based on a quantitative survey conducted among 140 participants, offering significant insights into how gender and family environments affect entrepreneurial choices. Entrepreneurship is fundamental to economic success, innovation, and social development. It plays a pivotal role in addressing unemployment and fostering

economic growth. The primary goal of this study is to investigate the factors influencing entrepreneurial intentions, particularly demographic variables such as gender, age, and family background. Specifically, it examines how the father's entrepreneurial experience and broader family support systems influence individuals' intentions to engage in entrepreneurial activities. By understanding the interaction between these factors, the study provides a deeper understanding of the factors motivating people, especially women, to pursue entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurial intention (EI) is defined as an individual's self-perceived intention to start a business venture or engage in self-employment. It is a significant predictor of entrepreneurial behavior and has been extensively studied across different contexts. Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behavior (TPB) provides a widely accepted framework for understanding how entrepreneurial intentions are formed, emphasizing the roles of perceived behavioral control, subjective norms, and personal attitudes.

Research indicates that demographic factors, such as gender and family background, are crucial determinants of entrepreneurial intention. Social and family environments, particularly parental entrepreneurial backgrounds (Kautonen et al., 2014; Xanthopoulou & Sahinidis, 2022a), have a profound influence on an individual's likelihood to pursue entrepreneurship. The father's occupation, especially if self-employed or an entrepreneur, acts as a key motivational factor, providing not only role models but also experiential knowledge about business operations. Gender has also emerged as a critical factor in entrepreneurship studies, with a growing body of literature exploring how gender influences entrepreneurial intentions (Liñán & Fayolle, 2015; Xanthopoulou & Sahinidis, 2024). Previous studies suggest that men are more likely to pursue entrepreneurial careers due to higher risk tolerance and fewer perceived barriers. However, women are increasingly showing strong entrepreneurial inclinations, driven by factors such as family support, role models, and societal changes that encourage female entrepreneurship. Nevertheless, gender-related challenges such as biases and lack of access to networks continue to hinder women's entrepreneurial success (Bullough et al., 2022; Langowitz & Minniti, 2007). The main objectives of this study are twofold: 1) to investigate the impact of gender and other demographic factors (age, education) on entrepreneurial intention, and 2) to explore the role of family background, particularly the father's entrepreneurial experience, in shaping entrepreneurial intentions. The research questions guiding this study focus on understanding how gender differences and demographic factors influence entrepreneurial intentions, the role of the father's entrepreneurial background in shaping these intentions, and the impact of education on individuals' entrepreneurial motivations, particularly across different gender groups. A quantitative research method was employed to address the study's objectives. A survey questionnaire was

distributed online to a sample of 140 participants (Stratton, 2021), ranging from undergraduate to postgraduate students. The survey assessed participants' demographic details, family background, entrepreneurial education, and entrepreneurial intentions. The questions were structured using a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”, to capture the participants' perceptions and intentions toward entrepreneurship. The demographic composition of the sample was diverse, with 67.9% male and 32.1% female participants. Most respondents were aged between 18 and 34 years, and a significant proportion of them were undergraduate students. A key aspect of the questionnaire focused on family support, with particular emphasis on the father's occupation as an entrepreneur or self-employed individual. The data was analyzed using IBM SPSS software to determine the statistical significance of the relationships between gender, family background, and entrepreneurial intention. The analysis yielded several notable findings. Firstly, female participants, particularly undergraduate students, demonstrated higher entrepreneurial intentions than male participants. This contradicts previous studies that suggested men are more likely to pursue entrepreneurship. Women, in this sample, expressed stronger intentions to start a business, driven primarily by social support and familial encouragement. Secondly, participants whose fathers were self-employed or entrepreneurs exhibited significantly higher entrepreneurial intentions compared to those whose fathers were employed in other sectors. This finding supports the hypothesis that family background, particularly paternal entrepreneurship, serves as a motivational factor, as children are exposed to business environments from an early age (Strydom et al., 2020). Thirdly, entrepreneurial education was found to positively impact entrepreneurial intentions, with undergraduate students showing a stronger response to entrepreneurial education than postgraduate students. Women, in particular, benefited more from entrepreneurial education, which enhanced their confidence in starting a business. Finally, social networks, including friends, mentors, and family members, were critical in shaping entrepreneurial intentions. Female participants, in particular, indicated that social support played a decisive role in their decision to pursue entrepreneurship. This underscores the importance of creating supportive ecosystems for aspiring female entrepreneurs. The results of this study provide valuable insights into the gender-specific factors that influence entrepreneurial intentions. While men have traditionally been seen as more inclined toward entrepreneurship, this study reveals that women, particularly those in undergraduate education, are equally if not more inclined to pursue entrepreneurial ventures. This finding highlights the growing importance of promoting entrepreneurship among women, particularly through targeted educational programs and family support systems (Kefis & Xanthopoulou, 2015). The father's entrepreneurial background emerged as a significant factor in shaping entrepreneurial intentions

across both genders, with a stronger effect observed among female participants. This suggests that role models and exposure to entrepreneurial environments from a young age play a critical role in fostering entrepreneurial ambition. Moreover, social support systems, particularly family encouragement, were found to be pivotal for women in their entrepreneurial journeys. This highlights the need to foster a culture of entrepreneurship within families and communities to encourage women to pursue business ventures. This study contributes to the growing body of literature on gender differences in entrepreneurial intentions by highlighting the crucial role of family background, particularly the father's occupation, and the influence of entrepreneurial education. It challenges the traditional notion that men are more inclined toward entrepreneurship, revealing that women, particularly those in undergraduate education, show strong entrepreneurial intentions. The findings emphasize the importance of fostering supportive family and social environments to encourage entrepreneurship, particularly among women. Additionally, entrepreneurship education was found to be a critical factor in enhancing entrepreneurial intentions, particularly for women (Bae et al., 2014). Policymakers and educators should therefore focus on creating inclusive educational programs and support systems that address gender-specific challenges in entrepreneurship (Zhang et al., 2014; Petridou et al., 2009; Xantopoulou & Sahinidis, 2022b). Future research could build on these findings by exploring other demographic variables, such as cultural influences, self-efficacy, and access to financial resources, and by conducting longitudinal studies to assess how entrepreneurial intentions evolve over time. Cross-cultural studies could also provide deeper insights into how different social and economic environments influence gender differences in entrepreneurial intentions.

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