

Like Mother, Like Daughter? Analyzing Maternal Influences Upon Women's Entrepreneurial Propensity

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Entrepreneurship research often underscores the fact that entrepreneurial potential of women is underutilized which limits innovation, job creation and wealth generation at the global level. Socially embedded gender disincentives have been found to be the major reason for difference in entrepreneurship activities between the two genders. Strong association of masculine traits with entrepreneurship has given rise to a stereotypical masculine image of an entrepreneur.

In this study, the researchers probe how a women's entrepreneurial behaviour is influenced by the counter-stereotypical image of entrepreneur. They examine how mothers' occupational roles and their stereotypical assumptions influence the entrepreneurial activities of their daughters.

The authors studied 5049 women belonging to different age groups segregated into six cohorts. Data was collated with respect to their employment status and parents' employment history. Additionally, the mother's opinion about 'women in work' was also taken into account. This ranged from the conservative stereotype - 'no career for women', 'family first' or 'women stay at home', to one accepting entrepreneurship - 'women to work' or 'equal opportunity'. Additional information about their key life events etc. was also collected.

Key Findings

The study came out with some insightful findings that are succinctly presented here -

1. Mother's stereotypical views of women in work and their occupational roles were found to influence the entrepreneurial propensities of their daughters.
2. Daughters whose mothers held the opinion that women must have an economically active role to play outside home were more likely to become entrepreneurs compared to those whose mothers considered home to be the place for a woman.
2. Daughters born to self-employed mothers were more likely to be self-employed. This confirmed the maternal role models' crucial part in the intergenerational transmission of entrepreneurial behaviour.
3. Women with better educational credentials were more likely to take up entrepreneurship.
4. Women with more children were more likely to be homemakers.
5. The stereotypes held by mothers when daughters were aged five years were found to influence the daughters' propensity for entrepreneurship in their later years (34 and beyond). This suggests that entrepreneurial behaviour among women is susceptible to be

made or marred at a tender age, depending on the stereotypical view held by the mother.

6. Living with a partner was not found to have impacted women's propensity for entrepreneurship. Thus entrepreneurial instinct is innate, which is not affected by cohabitation.

7. Prior managerial experience was also not found to have an impact on entrepreneurial behaviour of women. The authors suggest that this may happen because as women age, prior work experience may not necessarily be of importance to their entrepreneurial endeavour.

Thus, the authors confirmed that socioeconomic influences that produce stereotypical gender expectations contextualize how different women, in different situations, perceive or take up entrepreneurship. Gender stereotyping has an enduring impact on women and their entrepreneurial behaviour.

Therefore, the interest of family firms would be better served if the business families, specially the womenfolk, move from rigid, conservative stereotypes of 'women in work' and adopt a liberal view that encourages their daughters to take up entrepreneurship in future.

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