

Female entrepreneurship in the face of gender stereotypes in emerging MENA economies: Evidence from Morocco

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Abstract

Since the 1980s, women's entrepreneurship has attracted growing scholarly attention particularly in developed economies. The literature highlights significant contextual variations, with entrepreneurial experiences differing according to country-specific institutional environments, regional affiliations, and socio-cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

This study attempts to emphasize the phenomenon and analyze the difficulties encountered by women entrepreneurs in Morocco as a case study of emerging economies in the MENA¹ regions, which suffer from a real theoretical void of research conducted on the subject, as well as from several gender-related stereotypes.

Morocco offers a particularly interesting case: women make up more than half of the population (50.3%)², and increasingly excel in higher education, yet their representation in the entrepreneurial ecosystem remains disproportionately low.

Methodologically, the research combines quantitative and qualitative analyses. A structured questionnaire was administered to 200 Moroccan women entrepreneurs until the end of 2024. The study reveals that the access to the market and to financial resources, an enabling regulatory environment, work-life balance, barriers related to cultural aspects, prejudices and the weight of attitudes remain substantial hurdles in the Moroccan context.

The research seeks also to understand how these barriers are perceived and experienced by Moroccan women entrepreneurs, how they impact the success and the sustainability of their businesses and whether the weight of attitudes and gender stereotypes are truly perceived as the main difficulties within a gender-stereotypical context typical of MENA emerging countries.

Keywords: Women's entrepreneurship; Entrepreneurial Ecosystem; Women Entrepreneurs; Difficulties; Moroccan Women

¹ Middle East and North Africa

² HCP High Commission for Planning of Morocco: 2023-2024 Statistics