Social Dimensions of Social Influences Predicting Women Entrepreneurship Intentions

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Abstract - As online business opportunities continue to grow, development of entrepreneurship capabilities of women is seen as a complement to economic growth. Owing to the increasing benefits of online business, equipping women entrepreneurs and providing them with an enabling business environment is no longer seen as issues relative to human rights or social justice but crucial for sustainable development. Pertinent to enhancing entrepreneurial capability, social influence has predominantly restricted women from taking part in economic activities. To fully utilize e-entrepreneurship opportunities, this paper discusses the prevailing social dimensions of social influences to women entrepreneurship. The contribution of entrepreneurial activities to the economy has been increasing. This is an indication that women participation in entrepreneurship practices is promising. The prevalent dimensions of social influences to women entrepreneurship research are presented. The social influence dimensions can be alternatively used to predict intention and it is compatible with the theory of planned behavior.

Keywords - Women entrepreneurship, Online business, Intention, E-entrepreneurship, Social influence.

I. INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurial practices are characterized by innovations. Yadav and Unni (2016) defined entrepreneurship as a process of creation that embeds innovative opportunities that can be utilized to improve society economic life. Women participation in entrepreneurial activity has shown to contribute to national development. With the innovations in e-entrepreneurship, opportunities for online business is increasingly widening and opening doors of opportunities in online market as more good and services are made available online. As the awareness of business opportunities becomes well-known, more women are developing the interest of going online business. Siri et al., (2012) refer to personal interest as the attractiveness to participate in online business with the motive for autonomy.

Personal interest is a social factor that exerts an appealing desire that compels women to consider starting an online business. The pursuit of business opportunities with this zeal and commitment falls within a range of behavior that predicts intention to participate in entrepreneurial activity within the spectrum of entrepreneurship behavior.

Women's role in the family has advertently affected their involvement in economic activities. This effect has been attributed to the social influences from cultural norms and practices over time (Ajzen, 2012). Study has shown that wide gap is gender disparity resulted from sociocultural practice and has exerted social influences (World Women Drivers to Women Entrepreneurs in Saudi Arabia, 2018). However, there is pressing need to create a conducive business atmosphere to support women involvement in economic activities. As the awareness of online business widens, women role in achieving sustainable economic development has been recognized as crucial.

E-entrepreneurship is widely viewed as an open opportunity for women to participate e-entrepreneurial activities because it offers a flexible sources of earning to increase family income (Salime et al., 2017; Julie, 2009; Amzad, 2009) and also represents a creative, entrepreneurial path to enhance the economy (Varit et al., 2017; World Women Drivers to Women Entrepreneurs in Saudi Arabia, 2018). However, global gender disparity report has shown that gender gap is widening and restrictively limits women from participating economic opportunities (World Women Drivers to Women Entrepreneurs in Saudi Arabia, 2018). Ten countries that have witnessed significant improvement in bridging gender gap are presented in Figure 1.

![Fig. 1 Countries with the most improved gender gap in a decade](source: Global gender gap report (2015))
II. ECONOMIC IMPLICATION OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP

2.1. Opportunities in Diversities

As economic instability plagues most developing countries, government is making efforts to diversify the economic activities in order to explore e-entrepreneurial opportunities (Flynn, 2011). Participating e-entrepreneurial activities provide additional incomes and contribute to the nations GDP (Naidu & Chand, 2017). As government widens economic opportunities, women become more privilege than ever to contribute towards economic development. Women's involvement in economic activities is increasing; economic sector will improve as well as online market.

2.1.2. Entrepreneurship Contribution to the Economy

A study has shown that the worth of e-entrepreneur increasing (from US$695 billion in 2013 to US$840 billion in 2014 and is expected to reach US$1506 billion in 2018) as more products and service becomes available online (Kearney, 2015). This margin of improvement indicates that e-entrepreneurial activities are opening up more promising opportunities and is consistently growing with more participation of entrepreneurs and the market value. With the increasing opportunity available for women to participate in economic activities, in the near future, women will be economically empowered to contribute to the econony (Muhammad et al., 2013). By participating in e-entrepreneurial activities women earns income to grow their business and also support their family. Therefore, as women role in the economic development becomes clearer, it is evident that understanding social influences towards e-entrepreneurship intention can be used to predict behavior to participate in online business (Ajzen, 1991).

III. PATHWAY TO FOSTER WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Increasing unemployment rate especially among women living in the developing countries poses significant threat to the living condition of the rural populaces. A viable option to sustain in the adverse economic condition is to groom self-employment opportunities. The main socio-economic aim of embarking on self-employed business ownership is to tap from huge entrepreneurship opportunities online (Tariq et al., 2017). E-entrepreneurial is widening daily and technology is making it easier to share opportunities and sale product online. E-entrepreneurship potential cannot be realized addressing the socio-cultural influences (Shah & Saurabh, 2015). Different dimensions of social influences represent potential impediments especially among women in living in the developing countries. Possible and sustaining interventions are only through participating in e-entrepreneurship to alleviate poverty. Women entrepreneurs gradually nurture their entrepreneurship skill as they interact with other online users (Shah & Saurabh, 2015). Women e-entrepreneurship development involves processes of motivation, development of competencies requiring tangible and intangible resources.

In a study, Siri et al., (2012) found that personal interest for autonomy is an appealing factor compelling women to engage in online business. In an earlier study by Shabbir and Gregorio (1996) factors ascribed to be characterized by women entrepreneurs extend to comprise security, satisfaction and personal freedom. Autonomy was used to explain personal freedom in a later study by Siri et al., (2012) indicating that it is consistent factors among women in different region. Conference on women entrepreneur organized by ‘Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)’ (2000) concludes that entrepreneur among women is fast improving relative to personal interest. Sahban et al., (2016) shows that perceived changes in interest of family members positively predict intention among women and improves their involvement in different business setting.

IV. SOCIAL DIMENSIONS OF SOCIAL INFLUENCE

Study has shown that the social influences towards women participation in e-entrepreneurs in the developing countries increase poverty rate (Shah & Saurabh, 2015). The social influences restricting the entrepreneurial capability of women include:

- Access to support
- Cultural acceptance
- Illiteracy
- Internet literacy
- Market knowledge

Danish and Smith (2012) used government support, family support, friends support and personal aspiration of social influence dimensions as the predominant among women. Among the social influences predicting women's participation in e-
entrepreneurship, personal aspiration ranked highest, followed by family support, friends support and lastly government support. This finding is based on data from Saudi Arabia.

Faroq et al (2018) used four dimensions of social support comprising emotional support, tangible support, informational support and companionship support. The dimensions of the social influences were used as a singly construct to predict entrepreneurship intention. Findings show that the four social dimensions have strong predictive power than subjective norm. The novelty of the dimensions of the social support is that it measures both tangible and intangible dimensions thus; it can be widely applied individually or collectively to predict intention.

V. PREDICTORS OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP INTENTION

![Fig.2 Validated social influence dimensions for entrepreneurship research](image)

The dimension of social influences presented in Fig.2 has been discussed in section I and 4 of this paper. Sources of the social influences dimension have been used to predict entrepreneurship behavior of women in prior studies.

CONCLUSIONS

Women participation in entrepreneurial activities has shown to contribute to huge economic gain capable of boosting economic growth. As the awareness of online business widens women role in achieving sustainable economic development has been recognized as crucial and a complement to nations building. The increasing involvement of women in entrepreneurial practice is opening doors of opportunities for women to improve their entrepreneurship capabilities.

The paper discussed economic benefits of women participation in entrepreneurship and highlights the social dimensions of the prevailing social influence in women entrepreneurship research. More study is needed to examine the predictive power of each component of social influence dimension. Limited study has been conducted on the tangible and intangible dimensions of social support. Women entrepreneurs require training to be more effective in e-entrepreneurial practices. Social influences dimensions can be applied in entrepreneurship research to predict entrepreneurship behavior. This paper provided essential instrument to explore entrepreneurship capability and predict intention.

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