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THE FRENCH MUMPRENEURSHIP MOVEMENT: RADICAL FEMINIST OR ADAPTIVE PRACTICE? (INTERACTIVE PAPER)

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THE FRENCH MUMPRENEURSHIP MOVEMENT: RADICAL FEMINIST OR ADAPTIVE PRACTICE?

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Principal Topic

Among researchers, mumpreneurship is analyzed either as a feminist positioning of entrepreneurship, or as an approach confining women entrepreneurs in a sort of ghetto. To frame the discussion, we highlight the separation of the family and economic spheres historically caused by the capitalist organization, which has artificially eroded the idea of the social embeddedness of economics. Building on liberal and radical feminist theories, we argue that the existence of mumpreneurship can be analyzed using three alternatives perspectives. Firstly, it might be the expression of a radical feminist path, aiming at the merger the two spheres. Alternatively, the phenomenon could target balancing the two separate sets of work and family needs, either representing a deliberate lifestyle preference, or embodying the product of adaptive preferences constrained by the socio-cultural context.

Method

To explore these propositions, the empirical study involves a content analysis of in-depth qualitative interviews with 25 mumpreneurs of the French Association. To reduce subjectivity, we established a semi-structured interview guide. Our main objective was to gather information about their vision of the concept of mumpreneur, the reasons that led them to start a business (their motivations), the role of their close circle in this creation, and the resources mobilized (human, social and financial capital).

Results and Implications

The content analysis results confirm mumpreneurship as a female entrepreneurship alternative whereby the venture creation is a solution to the tensions that exist between the two spheres. We also reveal three distinct categories. “The choice-driven holistic mumpreneur” recognizes the social embeddedness of entrepreneurship, placing work and family in a single sphere, and represents a class of radical feminists using mumpreneurship to promote a new organization of the capitalist society. “The choice-driven separatist mumpreneur” adopts entrepreneurship as a means to better balance the demands of the two spheres. “The obligation-driven separatist mumpreneur” rather uses the entrepreneurial opportunity as a “rescue tool” so as to fulfill these demands. Mumpreneurship is declined into different types of feminist practice for societal change, aiming at reconciling both roles. Differentiating the effectiveness of these three types should probably be assessed using the overall economic and social well-being of the family.

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