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EXAMINING THE ROLES OF STEREOTYPE REACTANCE AND RELATIVE DEPRIVATION ON WOMEN’S ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTIONS (SUMMARY)

Golshan Javadian
Morgan State University, USA, gojav2@morgan.edu

David B. Zoogah
Morgan State University, USA

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Principal Topic

Previous research on women entrepreneurship has failed to provide an explanation for how women surmount the challenges they face, and how they build and run ventures despite numerous barriers. This research explains how women entrepreneurs overcome the negative gender stereotypes through the lens of stereotype reactance theory and relative deprivation theory. We argue that negative gender stereotype leads to experience of relative deprivation for women. Relative deprivation indicates not only the perception of disadvantaged position but also the resentment towards the disadvantaged position. Because of such resentment, relative deprivation is possibly followed by self-improvement response, here intention to start a business. We also argue that vulnerability to negative gender stereotypes among women entrepreneurs leads to experience of relative deprivation. Relative deprivation is argued to be followed by self-improvement response, here intention to grow a business. In other words, the self-improvement response to the experience of relative deprivation protects women’s entrepreneurial intentions from the threats of negative gender stereotypes.

Method

Two separate studies examine the research question. The first study relates to venture creation intentions and uses a sample of undergraduate students from two Northeastern universities. The second relates to venture growth intentions and uses a sample of women entrepreneurs from National Association of Women Business Owners (NAWBO). While the first study analyzes the acute effects of stereotype activation on venture creation intention, the second study examines the chronic effects of stereotype vulnerability on growth intention. Hierarchical linear regression is used to test the hypotheses related to both studies.

Results and Implications

This research shows how women continue to build and run ventures despite the existence of negative gender stereotype. In the first study, we found that activation of negative gender stereotype generates the experience of relative deprivation among female targets. The interaction of relative deprivation and entrepreneurial self-efficacy as well as the interaction of relative deprivation and perceptions of opportunities are found to increase the venture creation intentions among female targets. We also found that a female entrepreneur’s vulnerability to negative gender stereotypes leads to the experience of relative deprivation. Relative deprivation is found to positively impact women entrepreneurs’ growth intention. This research shows how women continue to build and run ventures despite the existence of negative gender stereotype.

CONTACT: Golshan Javadian; gojav2@morgan.edu; (T): 910-257-0593; Earl Graves School of Business and Management, Morgan State University, 1700 East Cold Spring Lane, Baltimore, Maryland, 21251, USA.