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WOMEN NASCENT ENTREPRENEURS IN ECOSYSTEMS: THE IMPORTANCE OF UNIVERSITY AND FAMILY (SUMMARY)

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 SUMMARY **WOMEN NASCENT ENTREPRENEURS IN ECOSYSTEMS:
THE IMPORTANCE OF UNIVERSITY AND FAMILY**

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Principal Topics

The decision to pursue an entrepreneurial path can be facilitated by supportive environments, or ecosystems (Lee and Peterson, 2000; Toledano and Urbano, 2008). An ecosystem is defined as an agglomeration of interconnected individuals, entities, and governance bodies in a given geographic area that collectively support entrepreneurial activity (Malecki, 2011). University students interested in starting their own new ventures are naturally embedded in two different ecosystems, that of their family (Habbershon, 2006) and that of their university (Fetters, Greene, & Rice, 2010). In this study, we look at the differential effect of family and university support on the start-up activities of young men and women nascent entrepreneurs.

Method

We use data from the 2011 installment of the “Global University Entrepreneurial Spirit Students’ Survey” (GUESSS), to an $n=21,073$ students from 21 countries. Our dependent variable is a tally of ten self-reported binary variables tracking different start-up activities (Carter et al., 2004). Explanatory variables include the perceived level of university support, and of family financial and social support. The hypotheses are tested using negative binomial regression specifications, controlling for individual, university, industry, and country effects.

Results and Implications

Preliminary results indicate that the effect of family financial capital is negatively associated with the scope of start-up activities, whereas family social capital and university support have a positive effect. While women engage in fewer start-up activities compared to men, the effect of family social support is stronger for women, while the effect of family financial support on the scope of young nascent entrepreneurs’ start-up activities does not differ significantly between men and women. Surprisingly, women appear to benefit more from university support in the pursuit of their entrepreneurial initiatives.

Our study reinforces the importance of the two types of entrepreneurial ecosystems, the family and the university, in affecting student engagement in entrepreneurial activity. In addition, we highlight the differential impact of entrepreneurial ecosystems on men and women nascent entrepreneurs. An important implication of our research is that a carefully tailored university support infrastructure can significantly advance the entrepreneurial activity of female students.

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