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SPOUSES OF FEMALE ENTREPRENEURS: LUBRICANT OR BRAKES? (SUMMARY)

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≈ SUMMARY ≈

SPOUSES OF FEMALE ENTREPRENEURS: LUBRICANT OR BRAKES?

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Principal topic

Current changes in the socioeconomic fabric and occupational choices render life-partner involvement in the business increasingly relevant to entrepreneurship research, policy and practice. This study examines the effects of life-partner's instrumental support on firm performance in female entrepreneurship. The idea builds on gaps identified in the relevant research streams, namely copreneurship, family business, entrepreneurial teams and gender literature. Precisely, family relationships among entrepreneurial teams are poorly researched especially copreneurs "couples involved in business together." In terms of study design, drawbacks are the preponderance of cross-sectional data, small-convenience samples, ill-reported non-response rates, lack of context variables and gender-biased measures. Indeed, comparing male to female is a discriminatory approach at the kickoff and using women-only samples is one solution.

Method

We consider all of the above using multi-wave data collected by the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies of France (92, 3% response rate). The final sample includes 8012 full-time female entrepreneurs with life-partners. Life-partners support is captured using their revenue, time dedicated to the firm, and domain-specific contribution to the firm (i.e. administration, commercial, production and human resources). Firm performance is measured by employment and turnover growth. We add context controls and focus on firms who grew between 2002 and 2007 using, most importantly, quantile regressions with account to survival bias. This technique reveals the relationships at different deciles of the sample distribution and not only the mean as in ordinary least squares regressions. We perform quantile and OLS regressions to demonstrate the relevance of the quantile method.

Results and implications

Results of turnover and employment growth converge. In OLS regressions, life-partner revenue, time dedicated to firm, production, commercial and human resources' contributions have non-significant effects, while in quantile regressions effects are negative in higher deciles. Overall, we can say that life-partner's instrumental support tends to have negative effects on the performance of female-led firms achieving higher levels of growth, and suggests different relationships in lower and negative growth firms. More research should investigate the mechanisms behind this negative relationship using household variables including couples' relationship measures. These findings provide preliminary insight for female entrepreneurs receiving support from their life-partners, business consultants and entrepreneurship scholars of the field.

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