Abstract:

The purpose of this research is to analyze the effect of different socioeconomic factors influencing the decision of Moroccan women who resigned from the public sector to create their own businesses.

The aim of this paper is explaining and identifying the main factors influencing Moroccan women to switch from the public sector to entrepreneurship. A survey is conducted using interview as a research method with a sample of women entrepreneurs residing in the city of Rabat.

This study will allow us to create an image of the main motivators guiding women to engage in entrepreneurial decision while dealing with socioeconomic difficulties and challenges.
Introduction

During the last years, many world leaders became very interested in developing the sector of entrepreneurship, including countries of the Maghreb, Africa, and United States of America. During his last speech in Cairo in June 2009, former president Obama talked about the encouragement of entrepreneurship and deepening ties between business leaders in both the US and Muslim countries (US Department of Commerce, 2009). Thus, Morocco is one of the countries that knew an important change in terms of female employment during the last years. It is considered the era when women do not belong only in the domestic sphere anymore. A large part of this working female category has decided to serve in the public service, from non-managerial position to top management. Public sector has many advantages, such as security and stability of work, however; most of these women believe that the public sector has many inconvenient, such as the flexibility of working hours, which create an unbalance between professional and personal life. In addition, there are other factors that motivates working woman to leave the public sector such as the income and career development, which pushes women to look for other professional alternatives. Therefore, through this article, we will be analyzing the main socio-economic factors that motivate Moroccan women to leave the public sector and switch to female entrepreneurship.

1) Theoretical framework

According the OCDE, entrepreneurs are the people that own the totality or the majority of an enterprise, and have a significant control over the operational management of the company. A female entrepreneur is a person who invests their human and economic resources into a business, and performs managerial operations in order to participate to the economic and social development (Chalal, 2013).

Female entrepreneurship plays an important role in the economic development and the increase of employment opportunities. It also participates in the decrease of unemployment rate and the development of the country. During the last years, we can notice a very important increase in the number of enterprises created by women. The statistics show that there are many factors influencing the increase of female entrepreneurship in Morocco. Therefore, our research focuses
on the individual factors motivating women who work in the public sector in Morocco to engage in entrepreneurial projects.

In their research, Morisson (2001) and Davidson (1995) states that personal characteristics have a direct relationship with a successful enterprise. Gender, age, marital situation, parents’ occupations, level of education, professional experience, family situation, and professional motivators are the main factors influencing people to start an enterprise. In this research, we will be discussing all the previous factors influencing women to engage in entrepreneurship.

*Age:* the age is a significant factor that influences female entrepreneurship in Morocco, since the decision to start a business is usually around the age of 35 and 45 years old, after a female acquired certain professional maturity (Lacasse, 1990).

*Professional Experience:* the professional experience is an important factor the motivates female to engage in entrepreneurship since spending many years working helps women acquire the necessary skills and knowledge to start their own businesses (Bel, 2009). According to Rachdi, there is a significant relationship between the decision of starting a new business and the professional experience acquired through the years, which also plays an important role in the success of the company (2006).

*Marital situation:* marital situation is an important social factor that influences the participation of women in entrepreneurship in Morocco. It also influences the success and the development of the company through the years (Rachdi, 2006).

*Number of children:* studies showed that trying to balance between professional and personal lives can either be strength of a weakness for the creation and success of a company. Therefore, entrepreneurship can provide better opportunities to be flexible in managing time between family and business. In addition, entrepreneurship can help women to manage between both work and family (Bernard, Moign, Nicolai, 2013).

*Level of education:* many studies showed that female entrepreneurs usually have higher educational level compared to the rest of the population (Rachdi, 2006). However, female entrepreneurs who work in handy craft sectors are usually less educated (Rachdi, 2006).
2) Methodology

- Sample and method used:

In this research, we chose a qualitative research method were we interviewed 10 randomly selected women, from Rabat city, who already worked in a public sector in morocco before starting their own businesses.

We made a list of 40 women that we were able to have access to from different sources, and then we randomly picked 10 of them. We were able to interview these women, mostly by phone.

- Variables:

The following are variable that we are suggesting that they have an influence on women’s decision of starting new businesses.

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- Data Analysis and discussion

  - Age of woman when she started the business

According to the data in hand, the average age at starting a project is 44 years old. All women are above 30 years old which can explain the fact that women need a certain financial stability in addition to a certain maturity before starting their own business. It also explains the fact the women need a minimum work experience before starting to manage a certain business.

Forbes magazine stated that the majority of well known and successful corporations in the world were started by young adults at the beginning of their 20s. it is also explained that during this age, people are more likely to take risks and engage in business ideas no matter how impossible
they seem to be. However, after the age of 30, people are less likely to take risks, so entrepreneurs prefer to engage on existing business ideas to reduce the risks of loss.

However, despite people’s assumptions about the entrepreneurial spirit of the younger generations, Sandler Training US research states that the average age of an entrepreneur in the USA is 40 years old, which confirms the findings of our research in the Moroccan context.

- **Marital situation when she started the business**

70% of our sample is composed of married women and the rest are divorced. In matter fact, according to Dr. Sushil Kumar Pant, there is a direct relationship between family situation and the development of entrepreneurship in Nepali Society. According to his research, Dr. Sushil states that Nepalese society is a collaborative one that lives based on joint family system. This is similar to the Moroccan society where family values play a huge role in the society. Therefore, marriage is an important factor that influences the economy of the country. The findings of this research are similar to our findings, since it suggests that households and families in Nepali society tend to not breakup, even after kids grow up, which puts more pressure on parents to work more and more to support their families (2015).

Therefore, we can conclude that marriage can be one of the big motivators for women to start their own businesses in morocco, since they need more financial stability to help support their families.

- **Number of children when she started the business**

“Role of The Family in Entrepreneurship Development in Nepali Society” also suggests that the larger the family, which means number of children, the higher the chances of an adult to start a business (Sushil, 2015). Our findings confirm the findings of this research since the average number of kids of our participants is 4. This number is considered above the average number of children per Moroccan family, which is 2.12, according to recent statistics provided by CIA international organization (cia.gov, 2013). This is also explained by the fact that the larger the number of kids in family, the more likely for women to start thinking of ways to help support their families.
THE SOCIOECONOMIC FACTORS MOTIVATING MOROCCAN WOMEN TO SWITCH FROM PUBLIC SECTOR TO ENTREPRENEURSHIP

- **Level of education when she started the business**

According to “THE ROLE OF PERSONAL AND FAMILY BACKGROUND IN MAKING ENTREPRENEURS IN A POST-SOCIALIST ENVIRONMENT”, there is a significant relationship between entrepreneurship and level of education (Dombrovsky, 2006). The findings of our research suggest that 70% of our participants are women who studied in higher education. Therefore, we can suggest that according to our findings, there is a significant relationship between women’s level of education and the decision to start an enterprise in Rabat. This relationship can be explained by the fact that women need a certain level of qualifications and knowledge before acquiring the ability of managing a business.

- **Age of children when she started business**

50% of our participants had children between the age of 0 and 10 years old when they started their businesses. 40% had kids between the age of 10 and 20 years old, and the rest didn’t have any children. This factor explain the age of children is not necessary significant in relationship with female entrepreneurship in Rabat. This can be explained by the fact that nowadays, there are more and more child care services provided, and parents a more and more voting for putting their children to day care and schools at an early age. Therefore, the age of children is not an obstacle anymore for women to start their own businesses, according to the findings.

- **Number of years of experience in public sector when she started business**

The findings of our research suggest that more than 50% of the participants have over 20 years work experience, majorly in the public sector. The other 50% have between 0 to 10 years work experience. The first half of our sample that had at least 20 years of work experience, explains that people usually need a certain work experience and professional maturity before starting their own business, which is supported by Sandler Training that states that women in USA usually start their own businesses at an advanced age, an average of 48 years old, where they feel secured enough in terms of professional qualifications and maturity.

The other half of our participants, who have work experience between 0 to 10 years old, can be explained by Forbes magazine analysis that suggests that people at a young age they are more likely to engage in more risky decisions compared to older ones.
- **Status of public function when she started business**

70% of women interviewed did not reach managerial positions in the public function before they left their previous jobs, and the other 30% were in managerial positions. This explains that career development has a significant relationship with the decision to start a business of women living in Rabat. In matter fact, career development plays a huge role on motivating people to stay in their jobs and reduce turnover rate. Therefore, if employees are unable to advance in their careers in their current jobs, they are more likely to leave it for other options, such creating new businesses.

- **Reason of creating the enterprise**

When asked for the reasons to start their own businesses, most women gave similar motivators that pushed them to think about entrepreneurship. One of the most common answer is to have better income. Almost all interviewees complained about their previous salaries when they worked in the public sector. Having a family requires to make scarifies and work harder and harder everyday to be able to afford a comfortable life for children now and in their future. Women claimed that putting their kids in public schools became dangerous for the quality of their education, and this is one of the reasons families need higher incomes to support their children. Engaging in entrepreneurial activities can be one of the solutions to help the spouse provide better lives for children.

Some women who did not reach managerial positions claimed that the reason they chose entrepreneurship is to have a better career development in the future. Other participants claimed that entrepreneurship is their way to become their own bosses.

Some female participants stated that family reasons, such as husband nature of work or age of kids, are some of the motivators to start their own businesses. Having their own businesses allows them to have more flexible work timings.

**Conclusion**

It is then concluded that there is a significant relationship between social factors and female entrepreneurship of women who previously worked in the public sector in Rabat, Morocco. The age of female entrepreneurs at the beginning of their entrepreneurial career has a significant
influence on making such decision. The marital situation, the number of children, the level of education, the managerial level, the hope of better career, and the financial situation are some of the factors that play an important role on women’s decision to start new businesses.
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