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REVIEW

Of

Bracha Efroni

PhD Thesis

“Factors influencing Israeli Woman Entrepreneurs’ Performance in SMEs”

Thank you for the opportunity to read and review the PhD thesis after the revision. It is an interesting research field, especially considering Israel as a "Start-up Nation" country. This context provides a unique opportunity to identify possible "success recipes" for women entrepreneurs. PhD thesis consists of an abstract, introduction, and five chapters, including a literature review, the context of entrepreneurship in Israel, conceptual model and methodology, results and general discussion. Five chapters are followed by the PhD thesis summary, a bibliography of 261 references, a list of tables and figures, and an appendix with the survey questionnaire. The thesis was improved, and I provide my observations below in line with the structure of the dissertation.

Introduction

The introduction provides a nice overview of the PhD thesis, starting with the definition of entrepreneurship, disclosing the gap in exploring women entrepreneurs' performance, their contribution to economic growth, and existing differences between women and men entrepreneurs. The introduction also provides the research question and the aim of the PhD thesis.

The introduction would benefit if more clear reasoning on why this study is essential and the selection of the mediating factor were provided. The same is with the research design and sample. In our School tradition, we provide the contribution of the PhD thesis to theory and practice already in the introduction.

Chapter 1: Literature review

The literature review chapter is well structured. First, it provides the definition of entrepreneurship, the historical development of the discipline (that I would not overuse in PhD thesis), a detailed description of the entrepreneurial process, individual and environmental

factors influencing the decision to exploit opportunities. Next, the chapter follows the definition of women's entrepreneurship, differences between female and male entrepreneurs supported by the structured literature review, women's entrepreneurial performance and factors affecting women's entrepreneurship.

Shane, 2003 work is still remaining favourite. I would not cite other figures and tables in PhD thesis.

Chapter 2: Entrepreneurship in Israel

I enjoyed reading this chapter, especially with new information added. It well discloses the context of the Israel entrepreneurial ecosystem. However, I am not convinced if Israeli women entrepreneurs' have different conditions than any other country women entrepreneurs. However, I admit that there are some cultural peculiarities due to the country and region's history and diversity. Also, it becomes interesting how Israeli woman entrepreneurs benefit from the "Start-up nation" unique environment and general success.

Chapter 3: Conceptual Model and Methodology

In general, Chapter 3 is significantly improved. However, there is still some room for improvement.

I wonder if objective "a) focus on small and medium enterprises (SMEs) which face unique challenges in the business environment". Throughout the dissertation, I haven't noticed analysis, testing or discussion on the unique challenges SMEs face.

In the "3.1.3 Theoretical Framework" section, I would eliminate fig 14 as it is "wisdom of people" in statistics and looks very trivial. Also, in Fig 13 an arrow is missing from OR to EP. However, then there are no essential differences between Fig 13 and 15. Maybe there is no need to show EP in Fig 13.

Usually "3.1.4 Research Hypotheses" section is provided together with argumentation and logical grounding why the author poses such hypotheses. Sometimes Hypotheses are provided at the end of the relevant section of the literature analysis.

At present, Chapter 3 structure and content is significantly improved. However, "3.2.1. Research Design" is too general information provided, and I suppose some typos are still left "The study used a qualitative (positivist) research approach using a survey to test the model, since the role of the researcher involved data collection and objective interpretation." (page 108) I believe the author had in mind a quantitative research approach.

Sections 3.3. is well written. The author did an excellent job of extending the description of the variables.

Section 3.5. might have been provided without the subsections as in general, the information provided in the subsections complements each other or overlaps. The version of the SPSS

program should be indicated as well. Section 3.5. partially overlaps with section "4.2. Statistical Analysis".

Chapter 4: Results

Chapter 4 starts with the statement, "One hundred and fifty-nine Israeli women SME entrepreneurs participated in the interviews for the study". It would be helpful to get a more explicit understanding of the sampling strategy – why 159 Israeli women SME entrepreneurs, how they were selected, how many were contacted initially and similar information.

Concerning the "4.2. Statistical Analysis" section, it would be helpful to understand what and why statistical software (SPSS software, but which version and if other software like Smart PLS was considered) was applied in line with the statistical measures. The explanation of why Univariate Statistical Analysis was applied is also missing.

Chapter 4 provides descriptive statistics results of the 159 Israeli women entrepreneurs survey, correlation testing between the variables, mediation testing, logistic regression analysis and finally, testing the research hypotheses.

Only three hypotheses were supported.

Chapter 5: General Discussion

Although the PhD candidate compares the results of the PhD thesis with several previous studies and identifies differences and similarities with them, however more explicit explanation of why only three hypotheses from nine are supported is missing. I would say that should have been the most interesting part of the thesis as Hasan & Almubarak's (2016) research results were different.

Furthermore, section "5.2. Contributions of the Research" – does not explicitly identify which theory of entrepreneurship or any other theory the PhD thesis extends. In other words – what new knowledge is created by the PhD thesis? Even if it is claimed that the thesis modified Hasan & Almubarak's [2016] model, it would be helpful to provide an argumentation of what was changed. Especially when on page 104 the author states that "In Hasan & Almubarak's [2016] study, these factors were grouped into internal (personal) factors and external (environmental) factors, while OR was investigated in its role of mediator variable, as illustrated in Figure 13, The Conceptual Model in Hasan & Almubarak's [2016] study.". From the statement, it is clear that OR was already tested as a mediator by Hasan & Almubarak's [2016].

I found implications for practice interesting and based on the practical experience of the PhD candidate. I would even better outline, based on the results of the thesis, what should be done for Israeli women entrepreneurs to have better conditions in order to achieve superior performance.

The PhD thesis misses the chapter on "conclusions", which would summarise all findings of the study. I would suggest renaming "5.1. Conducting the Research" (the whole thesis is "conducting the research") into "5.1. Conclusions". However, if the University PhD thesis format does not

require such a chapter, the PhD should follow the requirements of the degree-granting university.

Some general comments

The references are rather old, taking into account that the revised PhD thesis was submitted for the defence in 2022. Throughout all the extant literature review, I have counted 10 sources of 2020 – 2022 and most of the reports, e.g. OECD. A literature review would benefit if the phenomenon of entrepreneurship were described by more contemporary authors and research results instead of recalling the classics of entrepreneurship.

Also, I would like to note that the match of the PhD thesis with other sources is still relatively high – 32%. I would recommend reducing it to 20% taking into account that the match with a single source should not exceed 5% (please see Ithenticate report).

Conclusion

The statements above are more of a recommendation nature and do not diminish the value of the PhD Thesis. Bracha Efroni PhD theses meet the minimum requirements of that kind of research work and can be a subject of the degree of the Doctor of Philosophy (Management) defence procedure.



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