

From Working Woman to Entrepreneurial Woman A Socio-Demographic Study on the Evolution of Women's Work in Algeria

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ABSTRACT:

Most world economies today are focusing on entrepreneurship, particularly women entrepreneurship, due to its positive effects on various aspects of social and economic life. It can ensure material well-being, provide employment, absorb women unemployment, and develop the entrepreneurial spirit within different societies.

Algeria has undergone transformations that have impacted the role of women in both the family and society. The country's policy of market openness has encouraged wealth creation and private initiatives. Additionally, the state has increased its focus on the small and medium-sized enterprise sector, which has strengthened women entrepreneurship and encouraged women to enter the field of innovative businesses.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship; Entrepreneur; Women Entrepreneurship; Women Entrepreneur.

INTRODUCTION

Women now play an active role in various aspects of society, competing with men in fields that were once considered exclusively male. This is evident in their increasing involvement in entrepreneurship and the establishment of high-performing businesses. This shift has occurred alongside the expansion of the market economy and the financial and logistical support provided by the government for economic initiatives.

The issue of integrating women into the economy and involving them as active partners in development strategies remains one of the most pressing contemporary concerns for scholars and governments. With the evolution of production systems and changing work methods and management styles, women's participation in the labor market is now evaluated based on activity indicators. Employment opportunities are no longer confined to the public sector but have extended to entrepreneurship and private sector investment, where women seek to demonstrate their capabilities in business management.

As a result, the topic of women entrepreneurship has attracted the interest of researchers and specialists, especially given the lack of a strong theoretical and scientific foundation for studying this phenomenon in Algerian society.

First: Conceptual Overview of Entrepreneurship and Women Entrepreneurship:

1. The Concept of the Entrepreneur and Entrepreneurship:

1.1. The Entrepreneur:

There have been numerous and varied perspectives on the definition of an entrepreneur. Researchers from both economic and social backgrounds have provided different interpretations. The economist **R. Cantillon (1730)** is considered the first to introduce the concept of the entrepreneur. He was followed by several scholars from the French classical school, such as **Turgot (1776)** and later **J.B. Say (1803-1829)** and **Trad (1890)**. The Austrian school also focused on this subject, with contributions from **Schumpeter, Knight (1921), Kirzner (1973), and Casson (1982)**.

According to **R. Cantillon**, the entrepreneur is a capital owner who assumes the risks associated with environmental uncertainty. Meanwhile, **Knight** defined the entrepreneur as someone who acts based on market fluctuation predictions and bears the uncertainties of market dynamics. (Gouassmi, 2016, p. 161)

Joseph Schumpeter viewed the entrepreneur as an individual characterized by creativity and innovation, possessing talent, driving economic development, and having the will to succeed. He described the entrepreneur as an initiator, contractor, and business owner. (Ba Mhamed & Abbaoui, 2021, pp. 43-44)

The **European Commission** defines an entrepreneur as an individual who assumes and bears risks by efficiently mobilizing resources, innovating in the production of goods and services through new production methods, setting goals to be achieved, and successfully allocating resources.

The entrepreneur can be defined as: A creative person and a manager of a small or medium-sized enterprise who contributes significantly to the capital of the enterprise and plays an active role in decision-making regarding its direction or problem-solving. (El-Joudi, 2015)

An entrepreneur is also defined as "a person who undertakes the creation of products for their own benefit and risk, regardless of the type of product."

Don Harvey and Donald defined the entrepreneur as "a person who can identify and seize opportunities while others cannot". (Lounissi, 2015)

Alertness theories define an entrepreneur as an individual with a keen ability to recognize and exploit profit opportunities that have not yet been utilized in the market.

From the previous definitions provided by various researchers, we conclude that an entrepreneur is someone who possesses creativity and innovation, takes risks to achieve new production, and manages a small or medium-sized enterprise, whether financially or morally.

1.2. Entrepreneurship:

Entrepreneurship is defined as "the dynamic process of creating and exploiting business opportunities by an individual or a group through the establishment of new organizations to create value". (Lounissi, 2020)

Entrepreneurship is also defined as a process of creating new activities that involve identifying, evaluating, and exploiting entrepreneurial opportunities. The concept of activity creation here refers to establishing a new enterprise. (Lefkir, 2017)

According to Michel Coster, entrepreneurship is "a phenomenon of emerging and exploiting new opportunities that create economic and social value as a result of the entrepreneur's initiative, innovation, and interaction with the environment". (Baït, 2017)

Entrepreneurship is also defined as an activity aimed at creating a new project that provides added economic value through the efficient management of available resources to deliver a distinctive new product or to innovate a new economic activity characterized by creativity and risk-taking. (Ben Qataf, 2021, p. 186)

Entrepreneurship is a type of behavior that seeks innovation while organizing and reorganizing economic and social mechanisms to exploit resources and specific situations, in addition to risk-taking and accepting failure. It is a process that works on creating something different and obtaining value by dedicating the necessary time and effort while bearing the associated financial, psychological, and social risks, while also achieving results in the form of financial and personal satisfaction. (Belabed, Bayad, & Mokaddam, 2019, p. 25)

2. The Reality of Women Entrepreneurship in Algeria:

Women entrepreneurship in Algeria has witnessed several developments despite the challenges the country faced during the French occupation. Women represented a significant force alongside men.

During the colonial period, women took on various and diverse roles, depending on their region. In rural areas, they worked in agriculture and livestock farming. In cities, they were involved in sewing, weaving, and midwifery. In the desert, they engaged in weaving and pottery. They also played a significant role in supporting revolutionaries. However, entrepreneurial work in the general economic field was very weak. The percentage of women engaged in grain milling, carpet weaving, wool garment production, and selling these products to meet household needs was minimal. (Ben Abd El- Aziz, Belkaid, & Ben Abd El- Aziz, 2021, pp. 33-34)

After the colonial revolution, economic activity contributed to sustainable development by reducing poverty and unemployment, especially since women make up 49.5% of the total population, amounting to 16,934,472 individuals. Regarding women employment, women represent 16.9% of the total workforce, which accounts for 37% of the active population, excluding women labor in the informal sector, which was estimated at 51% in 2008. As for the unemployment rate, it evolved over the years: (Bouzidi & Taleb, 2015)

Women's participation in the labor market increased at a slow pace from 11.4% in 1996 to 14.3% in 2010. The weakness in participation is largely due to social factors such as marriage and child-rearing (i.e., maternity periods). Women were distributed across sectors as follows: 64% in education, 60% in healthcare, and 50.1% in administration, compared to men. The unemployment rate for women increased during this period despite a decrease in 2006 to 14.4%, compared to men. The rise in women unemployment is attributed to the same social factors, in addition to a higher unemployment rate among women with higher education degrees. In 2010, it reached 33.6% compared to 11.1% for men. This is due to the fact that as one moves up the employment hierarchy, women's participation declines (according to the vertical gender discrimination structure of labor). Despite a slight decrease in unemployment in 2011, it has risen again in recent years. (Bouzidi, 2014)

Between 2004 and 2015, Algeria's labor market witnessed growth and an increase in women's participation in the workforce. During this period, the number of working women increased from 1,359,000 to 1,934,000, marking a growth rate of 42%. The total number of active women rose from 1,660,000 to 2,317,000, highlighting a significant rise in women workforce participation. However, when comparing women's participation in economic life as a proportion of the total active population, it stands at 13.6%, which is relatively low and does not allow for the optimal utilization of human capital. Moreover, the total number of

housewives is 8,190,000, representing 61.90%. In addition, projections for 2005 indicated that around 80% of women would be urban residents, which suggests a positive impact on the future development of women wage employment in Algeria.

Second: Factors Behind the Emergence of Women Entrepreneurship in Algeria:

1. A Statistical Reading of Indicators of the Development of Women's Work in Algeria: From Working Woman to Entrepreneurial Woman:

1.1. The Development of Women's Work from 1977 to 2022:

Table 1. Evolution of Women's Work:

Year	1977	1987	1996	1998	2003	2017	2022
Percentage	3.5	7	11.3	16	13.95	17.6	18.3

Source: Based on figures from the National Office of Statistics.

Despite the increase in the percentage of working women in Algeria, these figures remain far from the global averages for women's employment, which reached around 45% in 2020, according to the World Bank.

According to the National Statistics Office, the number of working women in 2017 was approximately 2,529,445, while it was expected to reach 2,605,345 in the same year. The same source indicates that 2022 saw a slight increase in the percentage of working women, due to austerity policies and the COVID-19 crisis, which slowed down the hiring process in general. It is worth noting that the laws related to women's inclusion are excellent and are derived from international agreements, including those ratified by the International Labour Organization.

This noticeable development in women's employment indicators in general, and Algerian women's growing interest in entrepreneurship in particular, is due to their access to education. After independence, the Algerian state paid great attention to education, adopting a policy of free, democratic, and compulsory education at the primary levels. This policy resulted in a significant increase in school enrollment rates, a decline in illiteracy rates, and the widespread dissemination of education across the country. The state's education policy provided equal opportunities for both genders and eliminated social disparities by offering social services such as dormitories, school canteens, school transportation, and scholarships. (Triki & Hejjame, 2015, p. 287)

The focus on education and its expansion was one of the most significant aspects of the post-independence era in Algerian society, affecting both genders. Education became the most profound tool for cultural and social transformation within Algerian families, especially after families expressed great willingness and strong desire to encourage their members to pursue it compulsorily. This change in mindset, particularly among parents, led to a shift from a traditionally strict and authoritative stance to a more understanding and democratic approach. This transformation altered the distribution of power and social status within modern families, improving the position of daughters, allowing them to assert themselves, and recognizing the role of education in elevating their status. Education emerged as one of the most important modern means of securing professional employment, strengthening their social position, and instilling confidence in their ability to be self-reliant. (Aïssaoua & Aïssaoua, 2020, p. 168)

To progress, women should not remain inactive; their participation in social life is necessary to secure an economic and social standing rather than remaining isolated. (Fellahi, p. 556) This transformation allows women to assume greater responsibility, move beyond traditional roles imposed by society, and overcome obstacles that hinder their progress. This shift ensures stability and independence, enabling them to build their future, whether in choosing their academic or professional specialization, attaining high-ranking professional positions, and eventually establishing their independent families. This progression grants them decision-making power and allows them to create a new social and economic status that reflects their academic level. Consequently, female success rates have surpassed those of males, and female students now outnumber their male counterparts in some educational levels. This academic achievement has enabled women to pursue their ambitions, advance their education, and gain greater control over their career paths and personal aspirations. (Aïssaoua & Aïssaoua, 2020, p. 168)

Moreover, Algeria has recently adopted a national strategy for integrating and promoting women, which was approved by the government in 2008. This strategy emphasizes encouraging equal employment and promotion opportunities while creating an environment that enables women to balance their professional and family lives. (Triki & Hejjame, 2015, p. 289)

1.2. Fields of Women's Employment:

Table 2. Women's Employment Sectors:

Year/ Sector	1977	1992	2015
Agriculture	5.6	3.8	2.7
Industry	17.4	11	18.1
Construction	2.1	3.7	1.8
Services	12.3	67.5	77.5

Source: Based on figures from the National Office of Statistics.

After the Industrial Revolution, women had no choice but to enter the workforce. In reality, this shift became a successful social phenomenon across all industrialized societies, where the proportion of working women increased significantly. This phenomenon is an inevitable necessity imposed by economic and social conditions. The figures provided by the National Office of Statistics indicate an increasing demand for women in the labor market after independence, but in an inconsistent manner. The reality of Algerian women today differs from the colonial period and both before and after it, as they have achieved high levels of educational attainment. This has led to increased opportunities for their participation in the overall workforce, with the total working population reaching 10,594,000 people, representing 26.4% of the total population. The number of working women was 1,934,000, accounting for 18.3% of the total workforce.

On the other hand, according to the National Office of Statistics, most Algerian women tend to work in the services sector, this important tertiary sector, which attracted 77.5% of the female workforce in Algeria by 2015. Most of them are employed in the health and education sectors.

Five main characteristics of women's work in Algeria can be identified: Women's employment in Algeria continues to develop year after year, yet it still represents a small percentage compared to men's employment. Additionally, the crises Algeria has experienced have negatively impacted the rate of women's employment. (Werneke, 1978, p. 56)

The phenomenon of women's employment records its highest rates in urban areas, such as Algiers, Oran, Constantine, Annaba, and Tlemcen, where there is a strong female presence during working days and at office entry and exit hours. Based on numerical data, it is clear that there are female-dominated sectors in Algeria, such as education, public health, and administration, which have employed more than two-thirds of the female workforce since 1982.

According to statistics, women's employment primarily includes single women, divorcées, and widows at a higher percentage, whereas married women participate at a lower rate. Compared to men, the proportion of educated working women is higher than that of educated working men.

1.3. Women's Entrepreneurial Participation in the Private Sector in Algeria:

The model of the pioneering woman emerged in light of the social, cultural, legal, and economic contexts that were the main drivers for women's emancipation, leading them to think about producing and reproducing economic activities through which they could achieve social status and financial independence.

Table 3. Number of Women Entrepreneurs Compared to Men in 2019:

Gender	Number
Women	388,000
Men	3,085,000

Source: Based on data from the National Office of Statistics.

According to data from the National Office of Statistics in 2019, 388,000 women owned a business or were self-employed, compared to 3,085,000 men, which amounts to only 11% of women's actual participation in entrepreneurship.

As observed from the previous table, women's interest in entrepreneurship is ten times lower than that of men. This disparity in the distribution of entrepreneurs between men and women is due to several factors, including social considerations related to the prevailing societal awareness of the Algerian individual, such as male dominance, for example. Additionally, economic factors include financing difficulties, raw material scarcity,

and high market prices. There are also administrative considerations, such as multiple bureaucratic challenges, corruption, nepotism, etc.

1.4. Distribution of Enterprises Across Various Sectors in Algeria:

Table 4. Distribution of Enterprises Across Different Sectors:

Activity	Gender	Total
	Men	Women
Industry	78,410	8,097
Construction	5,706	186
Trade	459,676	39,665
Services	254,234	42,820
Total	798,026	90,768

Source: Guide de l'Agence nationale d'appui et de développement de l'entrepreneuria.

It is observed from the table that women entrepreneurs in Algeria focus their investments mainly on the trade and services sectors, while there is low demand for the industrial and construction sectors among Algerian women entrepreneurs.

Statistics issued by the National Agency for Microcredit Management in 2019 indicate that women show greater interest in this type of loan.

Table 5. Evolution of the Number of Beneficiaries of Microcredit from 2005 to 2019:

Year	Total	Men	Women
2005	3,329	932	2,397
2006	22,221	7,956	14,265
2007	17,231	6,103	11,128
2008	42,099	18,205	23,894
2009	60,734	27,542	33,192
2010	51,956	19,243	32,713
2011	107,611	39,294	68,317
2012	146,427	58,829	87,598
2013	110,702	39,398	71,304
2014	117,543	41,380	76,163
2015	84,101	28,238	55,863
2016	21,363	8,948	12,415
2017	41,844	10,532	31,312
2018	50,364	15,079	35,285
2019	23,425	7,400	16,025
Total	900,950	329,079	571,871

Source: www.angem.dz

The table shows that women apply for microcredit more frequently than men, which explains the modest and small-scale nature of women-led projects. On the other hand, women entrepreneurship differs from male entrepreneurship by adopting a participatory management style, favoring a horizontal organizational structure, and prioritizing social objectives such as improving family living standards, which makes it a family-oriented business model.

2. Characteristics of Women Entrepreneurs:

Women entrepreneurs are characterized by a set of traits, including:

2.1. Administrative Characteristics:

2.1.1. Human Skills:

These include interpersonal skills, focusing on the humanity of employees, their social and human conditions, and creating an atmosphere of self-esteem and respect. The human aspect is the fundamental concept guiding women entrepreneurs' performance. (Ba Mhamed & Abbaoui, 2021)

2.1.2. Intellectual or Educational Skills:

This refers to having an acceptable educational level, as illiteracy is a significant obstacle to achieving objectives and exposes women to exploitation. (Shalouf, 2009)

2.1.3. Analytical Skills:

These involve quick comprehension and understanding, as women entrepreneurs develop competitive plans for their businesses. They must view their projects holistically and integrate activities and functions within the business framework.

2.2. Social Characteristics: (Sari & Saïdani, 2017, p. 156)

- A supportive family environment that encourages investment.
- The ability to balance personal life and business responsibilities.
- Flexibility in dealing with human resources internally and externally.

2-3 Personal Characteristics: (Ben Abd El- Aziz, Belkaid, & Ben Abd El- Aziz, 2021)

- Self-control.
- Creativity and innovation.
- Risk-taking ability.
- Self-confidence.
- Excellence and efficiency.
- Responsibility-taking.

2.4. Organizational Characteristics: (Ben Abd El- Aziz, Belkaid, & Ben Abd El- Aziz, 2021)

- Time management and control.
- Organizational skills by aligning capabilities with work requirements and activity awareness.

3. Challenges Facing Women Entrepreneurs in Algeria:

Women entrepreneurs face various challenges throughout their entrepreneurial journey, as their presence remains weaker compared to male entrepreneurs, especially in Algerian society. This is due to societal perceptions of women, whether regarding their engagement in independent professions or cultural aspects still tied to traditions and customs that view male authority as significantly influencing women's professional decisions. Below are some challenges women entrepreneurs face in Algeria from social, administrative, psychological, and financial perspectives.

3.1. Social Challenges:

Women entrepreneurs encounter several social barriers, whether religious or cultural. Algerian society, known for its conservative nature and its skeptical view of active women, particularly in non-traditional sectors such as entrepreneurship, presents significant obstacles. (Cherif, Saoudi, & Aarab, 2021, p. 61)

In this regard, Yasmina Taya, president of the *Seve* association, states that women entrepreneurs in Algeria continuously face difficulties and barriers as they belong to a conservative society that instills submission to men. This has made women victims of societal norms, and some have even used religion as a barrier to hinder ambitious women, despite Islam being a religion of civilization, knowledge, and openness, never opposing women's participation in the business world. Additionally, cultural and social traditions have been exploited to suppress women's ambitions. For instance, in Algeria, women are not allowed to go out at night, even for business dinners. (Shalouf, 2009)

From Taya's statements, it becomes evident that Algerian women entrepreneurs still suffer from male dominance, living in a patriarchal society governed by traditions and customs. Furthermore, they struggle to

balance family and professional life, as entrepreneurship is a demanding field requiring significant effort and full commitment. (Cherif, Saoudi, & Aarab, 2021)

3.2. Administrative Challenges:

Women face several bureaucratic difficulties, especially when dealing with banks, as obtaining funds to finance their projects is a challenging process. Banks take a long time to approve these projects and require guarantees such as land, a house, or a commercial property in the entrepreneur's name. Additionally, administrative delays and bureaucracy are among the major obstacles for women benefiting from loans from national agencies and support funds, as these institutions take a long time to process applications—sometimes years. Furthermore, the interest associated with these loans must be paid by the beneficiaries, regardless of whether the project succeeds or fails. (Massoudan & Dris, 2016, p. 45)

3.3. Psychological Challenges:

Psychological barriers are the biggest obstacles for women entrepreneurs in managing their projects. Women still have fears about entering the entrepreneurial world. This was confirmed by American author Colette Dowling in her book, where she presented her ideas on what she called the "Cinderella Complex" under the title "*Women's Hidden Fear of Independence*." Many women have internalized the idea that they are incapable of taking full responsibility for themselves. The Cinderella Complex is a network of unrealistic attitudes and fears that place women in a state of partial visibility and shadow, preventing them from fully realizing their potential and creativity. Additionally, lack of experience in the field is one of the most significant problems women face in managing their projects. (Dris, 2017)

3.4. Financial Challenges:

Women entrepreneurs face financial challenges in securing funding for their projects. They often rely on self-financing, seeking support from family or friends. However, due to economic crises and the need for growth and modernization, many women entrepreneurs are forced to seek alternative sources of funding. They also face criticism and a condescending attitude, even from those close to them, who perceive them as always needing a guardian to dictate what they should do. (Dris, 2017)

Furthermore, women encounter significant difficulties in the market, as they often lack information about local and international markets as well as consumer preferences. This results in weak marketing efficiency.

Conclusion:

Despite the above, the annual rate of women entrepreneurship in Algeria remains low and un motivating. This is primarily due to the obstacles women face and society's reluctance to accept the idea, given its traditionally male-dominated nature. However, in recent years, there has been a noticeable increase in the annual rate of women entrepreneurship. This can be attributed to changes in women's status in Algeria, the growing attention from the state, and their increasing entry into the investment world. Women are considered half of society and play an essential role in driving development across various fields.

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