

Chapter 9

Women Entrepreneurship in the Light of Relational Capital: General Insights

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Abstract Starting from the assumption that women entrepreneurs are relevant developers of the corporate business in small and microenterprises, the main purpose of this chapter is to propose a literature analysis discovering how relational capital influences the first stage of women enterprises. Thus, a literature search on Scopus has been conducted to expand the international literature on the connection between gender studies and relational capital. In this way, evidence proposed are directed to better understand the debate on gender and relational capital.

Keywords Entrepreneurship • Relational capital • Women enterprises • Gender studies

9.1 Preliminary Insights and Research Questions

The amount of relationships that companies have with the external environment and with stakeholders (Freeman, 1984) as well as the brand, image, reputation, satisfaction and loyalty marketing that companies have in their relationship with stakeholders (Donaldson & Preston, 1995) identify relational capital (Stewart, 1997).

In this direction, relationships companies-environment are a way of growing up as well as the opportunity to create added value increasing cash flow and resources. Thus, relational capital becomes an element to obtain a competitive advantage in the market and a real source for women entrepreneurship.

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Women companies are increased in the last years. Direct undertaking of the role of an entrepreneur (Baluku, Kikooma, & Kibanja, 2016; Caputo et al., 2016; Mwatsika, 2015) is a trend that has involved Western countries as well as developing countries.

However, the aim of this chapter is to propose a literature review to investigate how relational capital (Lombardi & Dumay, 2017) contributes to the born of women enterprises. Hence, the research questions are the following:

RQ1. Which is the trend in the studies on relational capital of women entrepreneurship?

RQ2. How and why women entrepreneurs are using relational capital?

RQ3. What are benefits and obstacles deriving from relational capital?

This chapter contributes to expand the literature on gender studies and relational capital. Our literature analysis emphasises the topic analysed as emerging issue, allowing for the possibility to identify new trends and future directions for research.

This chapter advances knowledge and practice in the gender in management field and using relational capital by focusing upon empirical research, theoretical developments, practice and current issues. Evidence of the chapter are related to the debate on “gender and relational capital” starting from the assumption that female entrepreneurship is regarded as central to the development and welfare of economies; the deepening of knowledge of how women entrepreneurs manage the relation of her business can contribute to improving the effectiveness policies aimed at promoting women entrepreneurs participation in the economy.

The chapter is structured as follows. In Sect. 9.2, the method of the literature review is proposed. After, the findings are shown in Sects. 9.3 and 9.4. Implications for future research and conclusions are presented in Sect. 9.5.

9.2 Research Approach

We decide to search for academic contributions on the Scopus database. With the purpose to answer to RQ1, the first stage of our research is the selection of keywords to find relevant papers on the topic.

Particularly, the framework to analyse documents by Scopus is found on the matrix of relations that identifies four types of company network relations. This matrix proposes the intensity of the relation variable (permanent or temporary), and the type of relation variable (formal or informal) (Paoloni, 2011).

Network relations

Type–formal	1	2
Type–informal	3	4
	Intensity–permanent	Intensity–temporary

The matrix highlights the existence of four possible models of network relations using formal or informal relations, and temporary or permanent manner:

1. Formal nature - permanent manner.
2. Formal nature - temporary manner.
3. Informal nature - permanent manner.
4. Informal nature - temporary manner.

The network prototypes changes during the life cycle of a company. The presence and use of different kinds is characterised by the dimension and/or by the legal form of the company. A large company with share capital, for example, has a 1 or 4 type network due to its numerous legal obligations. A smaller company whose legal form is a partnership or an individual company has a natural trend to use the 2 or 3 type of networks, much more efficient and easier to handle according to the specific type of management.

We explain how we created the paper data set with reference to the number of articles, the type of journals and the nationality of the authors. We used search terms to find article title, abstract or keywords of different document types, published from 2010 to 2016 in the Scopus Social Sciences & Humanities database.

However, we found papers by searching terms “intellectual capital” and “relational capital”. Second, we found papers by searching terms “relational capital” and “enterprises”. Third, we found one paper by searching terms “relational capital” and “women” and enterprises”. After, we found papers by searching terms “women enterprises”.

9.3 Primary Evidence

We selected 252 theoretical and empirical studies to better define the state of the art on the connection between relational capital and women enterprises.

So, we restricted the scope of our research to the use of previous terms searched in the field of business, management and accounting, excluding the search results for the words “relational capital” and “enterprises” and “relational capital”, “women” and “enterprises” owing to the low relevance of these topics for the current analysis. We retain that there is no literature on relational capital in women enterprises. Thus, our research questions will be solved in the future research.

We consider only the search results for “intellectual capital” and “relational capital” on one side and “women enterprises” on the other side.

Starting from the results on women enterprises, we got 12 documents related to the business, management and accounting research fields. We decided to classify such documents adopting the Paoloni-Demartini framework (Paoloni & Cesaroni, 2016) based on the identification of four categories of documents (A. Article focus; B. Research area; C. Geographical area, D. Research Methods) in which are included specific sub-classifications of documents.

After, we aim to investigate documents included in the sub-classification “A2. Female entrepreneurship” corresponding to the 12 documents. The subcategory A2 includes researches in women enterprises, family business, relational capital and relationship activated by women during the life cycle of enterprises (Paoloni &

Table 9.1 Documents classification

<i>A. Article focus</i>	<i>N°</i>	<i>B. Research area</i>	<i>N°</i>
A1. Corporate governance		B1. Psychology	
A2. Female entrepreneurship	12	B2. Political and social	
A3. Conflicts of interest		B3. Communication	
A4. Differences		B4. Engineering	
A5. Discrimination		B5. Business	12
A6. Other		B6. Nonacademic	
<i>C. Geographical area</i>		B7. Health	
C1. Comparative	4	B8. Management	12
C2. Middle East		B9. Human science	
C3. South America		B10. Other	
C4. North America		<i>D. Research methods</i>	
C5. North Europe	4	D1. Literature review	1
C6. South Europe		D2. Qualitative	3
C7. Asia	3	D3. Quantitative	1
C8. Africa		D4. Mixed methods	1
C9. UK		D5. Normative	
C10. Oceania		D6. Other	5

Cesaroni, 2016). From the application of the Paoloni-Demartini framework (Table 9.1), we found 12 documents included in the “A2. Female entrepreneurship sub-classification.”

Focusing on relevant contributions, we identified papers on women enterprises with five or more citations.

After, we decided to investigate 137 documents on relational capital in the same field using the previous framework and changing the paper focus of the framework with relational capital (A).

Through the application of such framework to 137 documents on relational capital, we found 12 documents (Table 9.2).

Moreover, we identified also papers with five or more citations.

After these steps, we downloaded all the selected papers, and we classified highlighting the following factors: (1) authors’ nationality, (2) journals where they were published and (3) number of citations. Results show that a large part of papers on women enterprises is written by UK authors and is published in specialist journals. In the second case, results show that a large part of papers on relational capital is written by Spanish authors and is published in specialist journals.

Table 9.2 Documents classification

<i>A. Article focus</i>	<i>N°</i>	<i>B. Research area</i>	<i>N°</i>
Relational capital	12	B1. Psychology	
		B2. Political and social	
		B3. Communication	
		B4. Engineering	
		B5. Business	12
		B6. Nonacademic	
<i>C. Geographical area</i>		B7. Health	
C1. Comparative	5	B8. Management	12
C2. Middle East	2	B9. Human science	
C3. South America		B10. Other	
C4. North America		<i>D. Research methods</i>	
C5. North Europe	3	D1. Literature review	
C6. South Europe	1	D2. Qualitative	8
C7. Asia	1	D3. Quantitative	1
C8. Africa		D4. Mixed methods	3
C9. UK		D5. Normative	
C10. Oceania		D6. Other	

9.4 The literature Analysis

9.4.1 Women Enterprises Issues

In the first group “women enterprises”, papers refer to women entrepreneurs such as business enterprise, women’s empowerment, education and training, entrepreneurialism.

The paper by Roomi and Harrison (2010) presents an analysis on gender challenges of Pakistani women entrepreneurs. The paper by Price and McMullan (2012) investigates the role of mentoring in the wider enterprise ecosystem, by focusing the potential of online mentoring for women’s enterprise. The paper by O’Carroll and Millne (2010) explores the work of the Women’s International Centre for Economic Development showing that the rates of self-employment, business ownership and economic participation can be transformed.

Brierton and Bennett (2012) analyse the origins of the Women’s Enterprise Policy Group showing the need for a historical context for policy development. Brush et al. (2012) propose the analysis of the inaugural webinar session of the Women’s Enterprise Committee, International Council for Small Business. Carter et al. (2015) analyse the enterprise diversity in the context of ethnic minorities and women in enterprise. Braidford et al. (2013) contribute to the gender mainstreaming debate and investigate the support measures in the USA, Canada and Sweden directed to encourage women to start a business, analysing the role of women’s

business centres. Torri (2012) explores the gender empowerment analysing the impact of women enterprises in the traditional herbal sector in Indonesia.

The book chapter by Nilsson (2010) is on the topic of embassy for Women's Enterprise. Roy and Lahiri-Roy (2010) analyse an Indian women's organisation representing both a case in women's empowerment and a successful business enterprise proposing solutions to fight poverty and restore dignity. Waring and Brierton (2011) define the impact of women's enterprise on Scotland's economy and propose policy recommendations related to the increasing women's business ownership.

Weeks and Duffy (2011) investigate the history of the International Council for Small Business, International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship, National Women's Business Council Best Paper Award for Women's Enterprise Development.

9.4.2 Relational Capital Issues

In the second group "Relational Capital", papers refer to relational capital and intellectual capital, customer relationship, consumer behaviour, business to business, business to consumer, new venture formation, building family networks, knowledge management.

Delgado-Verde et al. (2011) investigate relations-based knowledge by distinguishing social capital and relational capital. Moreover, authors aim to analyse the effect of relations-based intellectual capital components on the development of innovation. Hormiga et al. (2011) investigates relational capital in new business startups with the aim to discuss the impact of intangible relational assets on the success of new business.

Sussan (2012) analyses customer-to-customer interaction as a subcomponent of relational capital by explaining the connection with business-to-customer relational capital.

Dicu et al. (2011) investigate relational capital of pharmaceutical companies through seven multinational companies, interpreting their reports and results from Romania's emerging economy.

Hosseini and Owlia (2016) analyse a model to assess relational capital of banks introducing measurement indicators on the Ansar bank case in Iran. Delgado-Verde et al. (2014) propose a model to analyse collaboration supplier and customer relationship effects on product innovation outputs. Ghane and Akhavan (2014) discuss a framework to determine relational capitals within service and non-service industries in Iran.

Zaragoza-Sáez and Claver-Corté (2011) investigate activities belonging to relational capital of six multinationals through a qualitative research. Peng (2011) analyse the input resources and transformation in a dyadic interfirm partnership through a multiple case study approach, applying intellectual capital navigator. Gately and Cunningham (2014) investigate how incubated technology entrepreneurs can build

relational capital directed to the new venture formation in the Higher Education Institution.

Pérez-Astray and Babío (2011) propose the analysis of the relationship promoter as catalyst for university/industry relations at transregional and transnational level, introducing strengths and weaknesses of university/industry exchange. Sharma et al. (2012) analyse the implementation of CSR initiatives in family businesses, proposing two cases of Asian family business.

9.5 Primary Conclusions

The literature review offers suggestions to define a research agenda in this field:

1. The relevant role of relational capital in female entrepreneurship;
2. Literature on the topic is not widely explored.

No article has been found that analyses the use of relational capital by women entrepreneurs working in large companies. From here, issues from these papers cannot be reported to larger companies as in the latter the role of entrepreneur/manager is very different than in micro-firms (Cesaroni & Consoli, 2015).

In other words, The terms relational capital and female entrepreneurship are not widely investigated by literature and we found only one paper from the literature search. However, we'll answer to research question 3 in the future through a case study analysis to connect to the present preliminary research on the topic.

From the CAOS model by Paoloni (2011) to analyse the relationship capital of women's businesses, our aim in the future is to provide an interpretive framework to investigate whether and how the use of relational capital supports female entrepreneurs. Elements of such model are the following:

1. Personal characteristics of female entrepreneur
2. Enterprise environment
3. Organisational and managerial aspects
4. Business time horizon

These factors have been analysed, in different research on women entrepreneurship to highlight distinctive features of female enterprises (Sherer 2003; Sarri & Trihopoulou 2005; Klyver 2011; Paoloni & Demartini 2012). Moreover, each of these factors influences and is influenced by the relational capabilities of the entrepreneur.

Our research aims to extend the analysis of the use of relational capital by Italian micro- and small-sized women enterprises. This step allows to gain a greater understanding of a relevant subject for all those, who are involved in the promotion of women's entrepreneurship.

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