



Analysis of the Literature on the Barriers that Affect Female Entrepreneurship

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Abstract:

Entrepreneurship is critical to promoting economic and sustainable development at a global level. In this scenario, women play an increasingly relevant role but face various challenges and barriers to starting and growing their businesses. The study pursued the analysis of the state of knowledge related to the limitations of women in the development of entrepreneurship. A retrospective and descriptive examination was developed, based on bibliometric procedures in the SCOPUS database during the time range from 2019 to 2024. The trend of the research was heterogeneous with a maximum peak of 25 in the year 2022. Research articles predominated in the area of Business, Administration and Accounting. The United States was the largest producing country, while the most representative affiliation was Tartu Ülikool. Three lines of scientific research were identified from the keyword co-occurrence analysis. It was observed that entrepreneurship plays a vital role in economic development and that the classifications demonstrate its multidimensional and diverse character. Understanding this diversity is crucial to designing support policies and programs adjusted to each context's specific needs and characteristics.

Keywords. bibliometric analysis, enterprise development, women's constraints, types of enterprise.

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ANÁLISIS DE LA LITERATURA SOBRE LAS BARRERAS QUE AFECTAN AL ESPÍRITU EMPRESARIAL FEMENINO

Resumen

El emprendimiento es clave para impulsar el desarrollo económico y sostenible a nivel global, en este escenario las mujeres desempeñan un papel cada vez más relevante pero aún enfrentan diversos desafíos y barreras para emprender y hacer crecer sus negocios. El estudio persiguió el análisis del estado del conocimiento relacionado con las limitaciones de las mujeres en el desarrollo de emprendimientos. Se desarrolló examen retrospectivo y descriptivo, a partir de procedimientos bibliométricos en la base de datos SCOPUS durante el rango temporal de 2019 a 2024. La tendencia de las investigaciones fue heterogénea con un pico máximo de 25 en el año 2022. Predominaron los artículos de investigación en el área del Negocio, Administración y Contabilidad. Estados Unidos fue el país más productor mientras que la filiación más representativa fue Tartu Ülikool. Se identificaron tres líneas de investigación científica a partir del análisis de coocurrencia de palabras clave. Se observó que el emprendimiento juega un papel importante en el desarrollo económico, que las clasificaciones demuestran su carácter multidimensional y diverso. Comprender esta diversidad es clave para diseñar políticas y programas de apoyo ajustados a las necesidades y características específicas de cada contexto.

Palabras Claves. análisis bibliométrico, desarrollo de emprendimientos, limitaciones de las mujeres, tipos de emprendimientos.

ANÁLISE DA LITERATURA SOBRE AS BARREIRAS QUE AFETAM O EMPREENDEDORISMO FEMININO

Resumo:

O empreendedorismo é fundamental para promover o desenvolvimento econômico e sustentável a nível global. Neste cenário, as mulheres desempenham um papel cada vez mais relevante, mas ainda enfrentam vários desafios e barreiras para iniciar e expandir os seus negócios. O estudo buscou a análise do estado do conhecimento relacionado às limitações das mulheres no desenvolvimento do empreendedorismo. Foi desenvolvido um exame retrospectivo e descritivo, baseado em procedimentos bibliométricos na base de dados SCOPUS durante o intervalo temporal de 2019 a 2024. A tendência da pesquisa foi heterogênea com pico máximo de 25 no ano de 2022. Os artigos de pesquisa predominaram na área de Negócios, Administração e Contabilidade. Os Estados Unidos foram o maior país produtor, enquanto a afiliação mais representativa foi Tartu Ülikool. Três linhas de pesquisa científica foram identificadas a partir da análise de coocorrência de palavras-chave. Observou-se que o empreendedorismo desempenha um papel importante no desenvolvimento econômico, que as classificações demonstram o seu carácter multidimensional e diversificado. Compreender esta diversidade é fundamental para desenhar políticas e programas de apoio ajustados às necessidades e características específicas de cada contexto.

Palabras chave. análise bibliométrica, desenvolvimento do empreendedorismo, limitações das mulheres, tipos de empreendedorismo.

1. INTRODUCTION:

Entrepreneurship is key to boosting economic and sustainable development at the global level, particularly in developing regions such as Latin America (Jian & Hongxia, 2023; Zheng & Xu, 2023). In this sense, they are essential to generate a transformation and a new development dynamic that enables economic growth (Gallardo-Vázquez et al., 2024). In Latin America, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) contribute to productive development and are a source of jobs, hence they are exalted in public policies, speeches, and political agendas (Bianchi, 2024; Ramírez Hernández, 2024). However, promoting entrepreneurship in developing countries faces significant challenges (Ekeoma, 2024; Restrepo-Morales et al., 2024; Ripoll Rivaldo, 2023).

Studies point out that in several scenarios the problem is not anchored to a low number of entrepreneurs, but to the scarcity of high-growth entrepreneurial initiatives (Kumar et al., 2022). This is because, in these contexts, entrepreneurship is often perceived as an avenue to circumvent poverty rather than a value-maximizing endeavor (Marshall et al., 2024; Stoica et al., 2020). Therefore, policies and programs to foster entrepreneurship must be accompanied by a transformation in the (Danns & Danns, 2022) and entrepreneurial culture (Rožman & Tominc, 2024). Moreover, these support strategies must be closely linked to development strategies and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Del-Aguila-Arcentaes et al., 2022).

Several organizations and initiatives are currently working to support entrepreneurship development in developing countries (Chau et al., 2024; Pradhan et al., 2020). For example, in Mozambique, the "Work 4 Progress" program of the "la Caixa" Foundation and Ayuda en Acción seeks to help young people and women access sustainable and quality jobs through entrepreneurship (Mataix et al., 2019; Stevano, 2022). Likewise, in Latin America, programs such as "doinGlobal" have been implemented in alliance with

the University of Salamanca, which offers training and support to entrepreneurs to develop their skills and improve their businesses (Estebecorena, 2020).

Understanding the diversity of types of entrepreneurship and the factors that condition them is critical to designing policies and support programs that fit each context's specific needs and characteristics (John, 2024). As an area of constant evolution, entrepreneurship has also been driven by innovation and technological advances (Hakala et al., 2020; Kravchenko et al., 2024).

Significant trends include using artificial intelligence and automation to improve operational efficiency and customer experience (Adebisi et al., 2024; Adel & Younis, 2023). These trends, along with the development of entrepreneurial skills and competencies (Awshah et al., 2024; Pradhan et al., 2020), are critical for positioning in increasingly complex and competitive entrepreneurship ecosystems (Frisch Aviram et al., 2020; Orozco Castillo, 2022).

In this regard, women are systematically occupying more relevant roles in entrepreneurship as owners and co-founders of businesses of all types (Franzke et al., 2022; Raut et al., 2023). However, despite this growing prominence, women still face various challenges and barriers to entrepreneurship and growing their businesses, especially in developing countries (Crane, 2022; Miranti et al., 2022; Torres Barreto, 2023). Some of the main obstacles include:

- Limited access to financing: Women entrepreneurs has greater difficulties in accessing seed capital and bank loans (Villaseca et al., 2021).
- Lack of support networks: Women tend to have fewer contacts and connections in the business world that would allow them to

obtain mentoring and business opportunities (Deng et al., 2021; Ojong et al., 2021).

- Double workload: Many women entrepreneurs must balance their entrepreneurial responsibilities with unpaid domestic and care work (Tahir, 2024).
- Gender biases: Stereotypes and prejudices persist that question women's abilities to lead and manage successful businesses (Ilie et al., 2021).

Despite these challenges, the exploratory literature search indicates that women entrepreneurs are increasingly demonstrating their great potential to innovate and generate impact (Dal Mas & Paoloni, 2020; Gómez Miranda, 2023). In this sense, it is essential that governments, financial institutions, and society support and empower women.

In addition, there is a need for a better understanding of the barriers they face and the factors to consider in creating enabling environments for them to develop their full potential (Rosca et al., 2020). Consequently, the objective of the research was to analyze the state of knowledge related to the constraints women face in the development of entrepreneurship.

2. METHODOLOGY

The study was predominantly quantitative, based on bibliometric analysis of the most relevant publications in the Scopus database, and aimed at identifying the state-of-the-art and emerging lines from the data (Chen & Chen, 2024). For this, a nested approach was employed where bibliometrics was the primary strategy. However, qualitative procedures were also emulated to analyze the content of relevant sources and achieve a better understanding of the data, such as the triangulation of sources and perspectives (Sánchez-Castillo et al., 2024; Sánchez Suárez et al., 2023).

The Scopus database was selected for its quality and prestige, as well as the 2019-2024 range, due to the topicality of the subject matter and attention to data expiration and trends. In addition, no language

restriction filters were used, although English-language articles were prioritized for more advanced analyses.

The main thematic descriptors used for the search formula were: women's, enterprise and limitations. The formula used was TITLE-ABS-KEY ("Women's" AND "limitations" AND "enterprise") AND PUBYEAR > 2018 AND PUBYEAR < 2025.

The inclusion criteria were to select all scientific articles of relevance and quality that explicitly addressed the three defined thematic descriptors. To this end, a team-level assessment was made of the indicators of methodological rigor, relevance to the topic, and a synthesis of each source, including the main findings (Gonzales Tito et al., 2023).

The strategy was carried out on July 03, 2024, and 126 investigations (n=126) were collected. Two researchers downloaded a ".RIS" file format and analyzed it independently in the EndNote X8 bibliographic manager. Table 1 describes the bibliometric indicators analyzed in the present investigation.

Table 1.

Indicators and description.

Type of indicator	Indicator	Description
Trend	Trend of investigations by year	The number of investigations per year and their trend were analyzed based on the representation of the trend line and its level of adjustment (R2).
Production	Scientific production by type of document	An analysis was made of the number of research and review articles identified.
	Scientific production area by knowledge	An analysis was made of the number of articles by area of knowledge.
	Scientific production country	An analysis of the number of articles by country and the levels of introduction

	of results was carried out using a density map. An analysis of the number of articles by affiliation was carried out.
Scientific production by institutional affiliation	An analysis of the number of articles by country and the levels of introduction of results was carried out using a density map. An analysis of the number of articles by affiliation was carried out.

Source: Own elaboration.

Vosviewer software and the Lens platform were used to create knowledge maps. The maps were constructed using the following procedures:

- Cross-country collaboration network: The objective was to analyze the main collaboration clusters between countries and the possible knowledge transfers between regions.
- Keyword co-occurrence network: An algorithm was run to detect co-occurrence from the bibliometric map network. An analysis of the main clusters was carried out to identify possible lines of research.
- Author collaboration network: An analysis of the collaboration between authors was carried out.
- Citation map: an analysis was made of the main citations in the period, according to the level of access to the publications and the comparison between the levels of open access and non-open access citations.

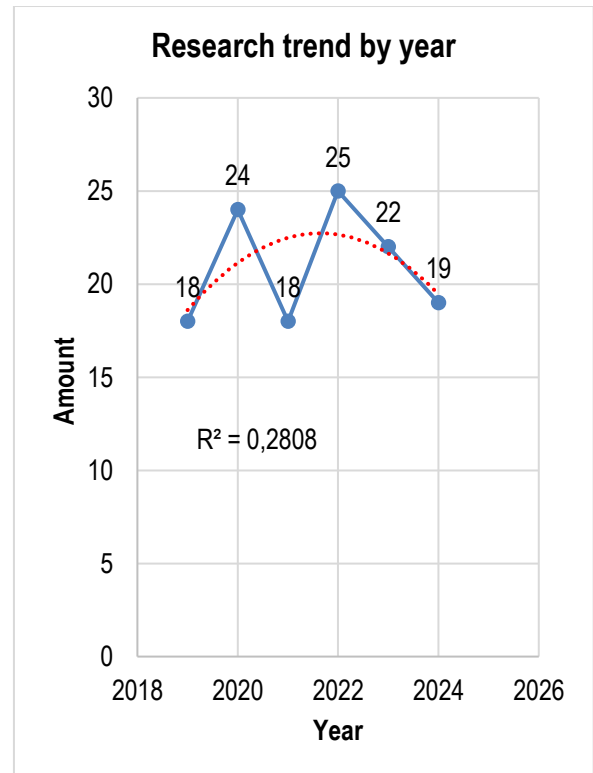
3. RESULTS

The behavior of the investigations showed a marked inclination to heterogeneity, with a range of 18 to 25, with the maximum peak occurring in the year 2022 (Figure 1). The observed trend, with a confidence level of 28.08%, was characterized by a polynomial function,

where in the last three years, there was a decrease of six investigations. This result may be influenced by the prevailing conditions during the Covid period, despite the persistence of women in their undertakings (Nouri, 2023).

Figure 1.

Trend of investigations by year.

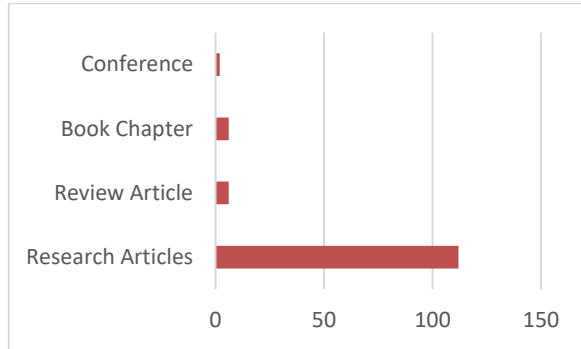


Source: Own elaboration.

Figure 2 shows an analysis of scientific production by type of document, where research articles predominated with 112 research papers (n=112), followed by book chapters and review articles, with six publications (n=6). The lowest frequency result was conference papers, with only two. This result suggests the need to deepen the field and extend the results of practical initiatives to conferences and congresses to strengthen their visibility. The data suggest that linking them to the field of sustainability studies would facilitate this goal (Raman et al., 2022).

Figure 2.

Scientific production by type of document.



Source: Own elaboration.

Table 2.

Number of research projects by area of knowledge.

ÁREAS DEL CONOCIMIENTO	CANTIDAD
Business, Management and Accounting	71
Social Sciences	52
Economics, Econometrics and Finance	45
Medicine	12
Environmental Science	11
Arts and Humanities	8
Agricultural and biological sciences	6
Computer Science	5
Engineering	4
Decision Sciences	4
Multidisciplinary	4
Psychology	4
Chemical Engineering	3
Biochemistry, Genetics and Molecular Biology	1

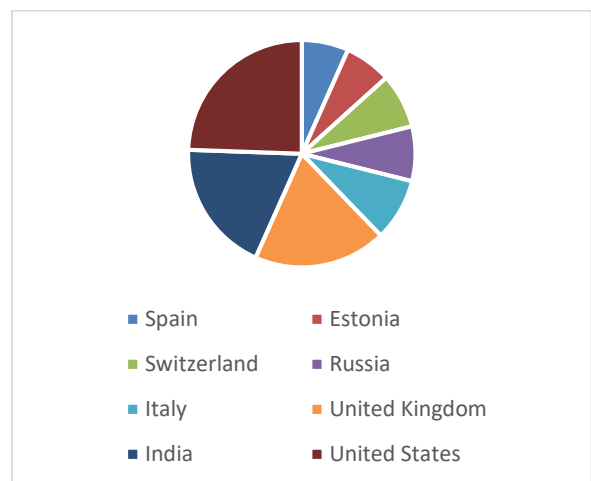
Energy	1
Pharmacology, Toxicology and Pharmaceuticals	1
Total	232

From the analysis of the amount of research by area of knowledge (Table 2), it was evident that the area of Business, Administration, and Accounting was the most representative with 71 research (n=71). This area is particularly emphasized due to its role in the development of entrepreneurship (Afrin et al., 2024). This was followed by Social Sciences and Economics, Econometrics, and Finance, with 52 and 45 investigations, respectively.

There was evidence of research in 64 countries; Figure 3 shows an analysis of the countries with six researches or more, where it was evidenced that the most producing country is the United States with 22 publications (n=22), followed by India and the United Kingdom both with 17 researches (n=17) and in third place Italy with eight publications (n=8). The list was completed by Switzerland and Russia with 7, as well as Spain and Estonia.

Figure 3.

Scientific production by country.

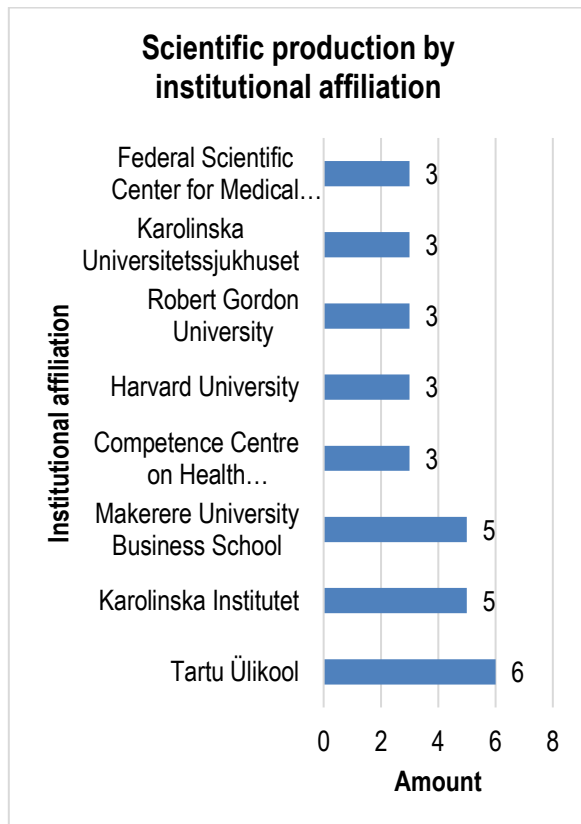


Source: Own elaboration.

Figure 4 shows an analysis of scientific production by institutional affiliation. Tartu Ülikool was the most representative affiliation with six publications (n=6), and Karolinska Institutet and Makerere University Business School both with five publications (n=5). These results do not coincide with those found by a previous study (Raman et al., 2022), suggesting the need to go deeper into the keywords used as descriptors and the subordinations that are established among categories.

Figure 4.

Scientific production by institutional affiliation.



Source: Own elaboration.

Figure 5 shows the collaboration network between countries where four clusters were identified. The United States was at the center, in relation to the United Kingdom, and closer to it was India, which, in turn, is related to countries such as Spain and Switzerland. These findings suggest the importance of strengthening female entrepreneurship ecosystems

and ways of relating, as a study on the subject pointed out (Anggadwita & Indarti, 2023).

Figure 5.

Inter-country collaboration network.



Source: Own elaboration.

A keyword co-occurrence analysis was performed (Figure 6), where 17 items were identified and grouped into three main clusters, which, from their analysis, identified three lines of scientific research, as summarized in Table 4. As mentioned previously, it is still necessary to deepen the conceptual networks and how fields of knowledge and lines of research converge.

Figure 6.

Keyword co-occurrence network.



Source: Own elaboration.

Table 4

Main lines of scientific research identified.

Clúster	Ítems (%)	Línea de investigación	Referencia
C1	8 (47,1 %)	To evaluate the impact of COVID-19 infection on the manifestation and management of endometriosis in adult	(Brubaker et al., 2021) (Mucha, 2022) (Webster et al., 2022)

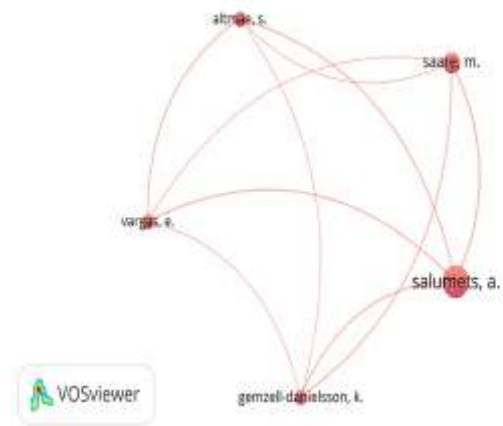
		women and its effect as a limitation for the development of businesses.	
C2	6 (35,3 %)	To study how gender influences the innovation and performance of women-led SMEs in the field of social entrepreneurship in India. Study the factors that influence the success of women entrepreneurs, with the aim of identifying strategies to promote female entrepreneurship.	(Bongomin et al., 2020) (Crespo-Rosas & Franco-García, 2023) (Expósito et al., 2023)
C3	3 (17,6 %)	Study the factors that influence the success of women entrepreneurs, with the aim of identifying strategies to promote female entrepreneurship. Study the factors that influence the success of women entrepreneurs, with the aim of identifying strategies to promote female entrepreneurship.	(Brogan & Dooley, 2023) (Cho et al., 2021) (Handaragama & Kusakabe, 2021) (Mukherjee, 2023)
Total	17		

Source: Own elaboration.

A study of the scientific production per author with a level of cooccurrence greater than or equal to two was carried out (Figure 7), where it was found that the most productive author with five investigations was Salumets, A., followed by Saare, M. and Al Serhan, O. with three and two investigations, respectively. This result suggests the formation of an invisible college around these authors and their influence, which would facilitate the establishment of conceptual bases and the creation of collaborative networks (Gómez Cano, 2023).

Figure 7.

Author collaboration network.



4. Source: Own elaboration.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Today, as evidenced by the quantitative and qualitative data analyzed in the sources, the crucial role played by female entrepreneurship in the global economy cannot be underestimated (Franzke et al., 2022; Ojong et al., 2021). Throughout history, and especially recent history, women have faced unique challenges in attempting to enter the entrepreneurial world (Naguib, 2024). Although the articles generally showed a positive approach and pointed out investigative avenues marked by critical factors for success, the impact of barriers is undeniable.

One of the key aspects highlighted in the literature is the contribution of female entrepreneurship to diversity in the marketplace. Women bring unique perspectives, innovative ideas, and a different approach to problem-solving, which enriches the entrepreneurial ecosystem as a whole. Moreover, encouraging women's active participation in entrepreneurship is not only a moral imperative in line with the various agendas endorsed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. From an economic point of view, strengthening women's entrepreneurship is an economically smart strategy that facilitates the creation of new entrepreneurial networks.

A key finding is that women-led ventures positively impact job creation, economic growth, and innovation. Recent studies show that companies with higher female representation in leadership positions tend to be

more profitable and sustainable in the long term (Arévalo Zurita et al., 2023; Agarwal et al., 2020). This result suggests that empowering women to start and run their businesses benefits individual women entrepreneurs and has positive effects at the macroeconomic level.

Alternatively, female entrepreneurship plays a crucial role in reducing the gender gap in the workplace. Providing professional and economic development opportunities for women creates a virtuous cycle that fosters gender equality and female empowerment at all levels of society. In short, women's entrepreneurship can be considered agents of change and transformational engines; hence, their insertion in projects that promote innovation and boost economic growth is critical.

Regarding barriers, it was found that developing and implementing specific support policies and programs for women entrepreneurs is critical (Martínez-Rodríguez et al., 2022) (Ricardo Jiménez, 2022). These supports should foster access to stable and reliable sources of financing, mentoring, or advisory programs, whether academic or offered by government institutions, as well as networking since limited access to hidden networks has proven crucial for women aspiring to grow in fields usually dominated by men.

Another group of barriers is associated with the transgression of personal and family dynamics based on the traditional work-life balance (De Clercq & Brieger, 2022) (Gómez Miranda, 2022). This is not only due to objective issues associated with time management and resource management but also to subjective issues marked by gender biases or lack of experience in designing support mechanisms. This last aspect, without making an apology for the walls intentionally designed to hinder the inclusion of women in networks and ecosystems of entrepreneurship or access to important positions.

In order to address this group of limitations, it is necessary to combine efforts to provide essential services adapted to the needs of women entrepreneurs, as well as plans to improve labor

flexibility. According to the literature, the goal is to facilitate women entrepreneurs' work-life balance.

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