

Do Gender Differences Persist After Entrepreneurship Education? Evidence from Entrepreneurial and Socio-Cognitive Competencies in Tunisia

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Abstract:

Entrepreneurship is often associated with gender stereotypes portraying entrepreneurial competencies and intentions as more characteristic of men than women. In contrast, contemporary perspectives suggest that these competencies are primarily shaped through learning and experience rather than determined by gender. Against this background, this study investigates whether gender differences persist in entrepreneurial intention, its antecedents (personal attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control), and key entrepreneurial and socio-cognitive competencies—namely entrepreneurial self-efficacy, resilience, and empathy—among students and graduates who shared a common practice-oriented entrepreneurship education experience. Data were collected from 494 Tunisian students and graduates (337 women and 157 men) who had all completed an entrepreneurship course incorporating practical learning activities. Independent-samples t-tests and Cohen's d effect size analyses were conducted to compare female and male participants. The findings revealed no statistically significant gender differences across any of the variables examined. Moreover, all effect sizes were negligible, indicating that the observed differences were not only statistically non-significant but also practically trivial. Across all constructs, participants reported relatively high levels of entrepreneurial intention and entrepreneurial and socio-cognitive competencies, regardless of gender. These findings suggest that the gender differences frequently reported in entrepreneurship research are not necessarily observed when women and men benefit from comparable entrepreneurial learning experiences. The study contributes to entrepreneurship education research by providing empirical evidence that entrepreneurial intention and entrepreneurial and socio-cognitive competencies are more consistent with a developmental perspective than with traditional gender-based assumptions.

Keywords:

Entrepreneurship education, gender stereotypes, entrepreneurial intention, entrepreneurial self-efficacy, resilience, empathy, attitude toward entrepreneurship, perceived behavioral control, subjective norms.