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## Editorial

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Entrepreneurship has long been recognised as a not negligible engine of economic growth for the economies at the global level (Audretsch et al., 2006; Audretsch, 2007). When dealing with entrepreneurship, it is undoubtedly time to overcome a related traditional 'myth', specifically that of considering entrepreneurship as a male-dominated activity.

Data are indeed explicative, as according to the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM, 2017/2018), in 2017, women own about 46% of all the businesses in the world.

Referring to gender issues, the increasing number of firms created and managed by women over the last decades worldwide has led scholars and policymakers to recognise women as the fastest growing entrepreneurial populations in the world (Jennings and Brush, 2013). In line with this, if the discourse comes to academic debate on female entrepreneurship, we do recognise that more than 30 years have passed since the first study on this topic was published, and since then, an outpouring of research on the topic has emerged (Jennings and Brush, 2013).

Looking at the themes that scholars have been investigating over the years, it is possible to identify topics that, introduced at the dawn of this research domain, continue to remain in the research agenda. We refer specifically to themes such as female business owners' entrepreneurial and psychological characteristics, women-owned business financing, and women entrepreneurs' goals and performance (e.g., Anna et al., 2000; Brush, 1992; Greene et al., 1999; Hisrich and Brush, 1984; Powell and Ansic, 1997).

Interestingly, although these themes can be considered as well-established, to date, some pioneering scholars have been contributing to moving ahead this research field in several ways: by reframing the consolidated research questions, by proposing new research avenues, by employing new empirical methods and/or by investigating new contexts.

It is also possible to identify emerging topics, such as the role and contribution of immigrant women entrepreneurs, the economic and social role that women entrepreneurs play in developing countries, the role of the 'context' in which the female firms are grounded, and the consideration of women-owned firms established in masculine fields (e.g., Ahl and Nelson, 2015; Collins and Low, 2010; Essers et al., 2010; Foss et al., 2019; Marlow and McAdam, 2013; Poggesi et al., 2019, 2020). Although they have not yet come to the fore, these emerging topics could surely contribute to generating some appealing insights that may enhance our understanding of the characteristics of women-owned businesses, stemming from the assumption that entrepreneurship does not have the same features around the world.

As the phenomenon of female entrepreneurship thus embraces many often intertwined different perspectives, with this special issue, we aim to encourage the adoption of new perspectives in studying this topic, to disprove or confirm established knowledge, and to investigate new issues in female entrepreneurship.

In line with this, the papers in this issue of the *International Journal of Globalisation and Small Business* address various key issues for female entrepreneurship research, especially increasing our understanding of the following main topics:

- 1 education
- 2 work-family conflict (WFC)
- 3 financing
- 4 the role of the contextual factors.

As far as education is taken into account, the paper by Aggestam and Wigren-Kristoferson opens up an interesting debate on the impact of education

programmes on entrepreneurship, finding out a persisting gendered nature of academic entrepreneurship education in the case of Sweden.

Looking at the WFC issue, the study by Poggesi et al. aims at shedding some lights on a very under-investigated topic in female entrepreneurship literature, i.e., that of WFC, testing a model that integrates the previous academic results on WFC by considering either selected work and family antecedents or selected consequences on a sample of 511 Italian women entrepreneurs.

The paper by Cervelló Royo et al. deals with the topic of financing investigating data from a sample of 192 Spanish entrepreneurs; results show that statistically significant differences emerge between male and female entrepreneurs, worth to be further investigated.

The topic of financing is also investigated by Na and Erogul's paper, in which a review of external financing sources and decisions in the case of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) across 56 countries is carried on, and a specific accent on the connections with the role of gender is made.

Finally, the conceptual article by Ruiz-Martínez et al. seeks to bring light on those contextual conditions to consider when the analysis on female entrepreneurship takes into account Latin America socio-economic context, also highlighting how these peculiar conditions do interact with the current COVID-19 pandemic and economic crisis.

As emerged from the above, different are the perspectives, as well as the methods adopted in the studies of this special issue, that jointly contribute to foster the understanding of female entrepreneurship dynamics, helping not only scholars, but also practitioners and policy makers in better anchoring their decisions towards fruitful practical implications.

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