

# Female entrepreneurship in catalonia: an institutional approach

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## **Abstract**

In recent years, women have begun to be recognized as an important factor in the creation of new businesses and in the promotion of economic development. However, despite the efforts made in various fields, the number of female entrepreneurs continues to be lower than that of their male counterparts. The main objective of this investigation is to analyse the influence of environmental factors on female entrepreneurial activity in Catalonia (Spain). To achieve this end, institutional economic theory (North, 1990, 2005) is used as the theoretical framework. Thus, this study explicitly: 1) explores, identifies and qualitatively analyses the environmental factors (formal and informal institutions) that influence female entrepreneurship in Catalonia; 2) explores and conducts a qualitative analysis of the socio-cultural factors (informal institutions) that influence female entrepreneurship in Catalonia; 3) quantitatively analyses the environmental factors (formal and informal institutions) that influenced female entrepreneurship in Spain in the year 2010; 4) quantitatively analyses the socio-cultural factors (informal institutions) that influenced female entrepreneurship in Catalonia in the years 2009 and 2010; and 5) quantitatively analyses the environmental factors (formal and informal institutions) that influenced female entrepreneurship in Spain at a regional level for the period 2003–2010. The methodologies used in order to achieve the objectives include a qualitative methodology that should permit us to obtain information that, in turn, will allow us to understand better the nature of the behaviour of female entrepreneurs and the factors that influence their behaviour. Furthermore, the methodologies used include a quantitative method that will allow us to obtain greater generalization and objectification of the results by way of the samples used, which should permit us to make inferences regarding female entrepreneurs in Catalonia. This investigation provides a method for analysing the environmental factors (institutional factors) that influence female entrepreneurial activity at an individual, regional and national level, combining data from the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) and from both the Adult Population Survey (APS) and the National Expert Survey (NES) with information from the National Statistics Institute (INE). The main findings of the research reveal that, while both formal and informal factors affect entrepreneurship, the effect of informal institutions (social networks, role models, fear of failure, perceived capabilities, entrepreneurial career and family context) is more significant than the effect of formal institutions (financing, non-economic policies and assistance, gender-based pay gap, family size or education) in the case of female entrepreneurs in Catalonia and Spain. This investigation suggests a series of implications at the academic level, as it positions institutional economics as an appropriate conceptual framework for the analysis of the environmental factors that contribute to the promotion of female entrepreneurial activity in Catalonia and Spain. From the practical perspective, this study may help to generate policies that improve the perception of entrepreneurial capabilities, increase the visibility of female role models and favour the integration of the female entrepreneurs' family context.