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Analysis of Foreign Countries on Women's Entrepreneurship

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ABSTRACT

The article describes the experience of foreign countries on measures implemented throughout the world related to the development of women's entrepreneurship. It reveals the experiences of Saudi Arabia and Kazakhstan, as well as international trends. This work was carried out as part of a study devoted to the analysis of indicators related to women's entrepreneurship.

Keywords: entrepreneurship, women, gender issues, index, women's entrepreneurship.

1. Introduction

The development of women's entrepreneurship has emerged as a key global priority, recognized for its potential to drive inclusive economic growth, reduce poverty, and advance gender equality. Numerous international organizations, including the United Nations, as well as national governments, have launched strategic initiatives to foster women's active participation in business. Despite the progress, substantial regional disparities remain, particularly in the Middle East and North Africa, where structural and institutional barriers continue to limit women's entrepreneurial potential. This paper explores the global landscape of women's entrepreneurship promotion with a special focus on the institutional frameworks and policy reforms implemented in Saudi Arabia and Kazakhstan. Drawing on empirical evidence and international experiences, the study emphasizes the critical role of institutional support and gender-inclusive policy environments in fostering sustainable and impactful female entrepreneurship.

2. Discussion and analysis

The development of women's entrepreneurship has emerged as a key global priority, recognized for its potential to drive inclusive economic growth, reduce poverty, and advance gender equality. Numerous international organizations, including the United Nations, as well as national governments, have launched strategic initiatives to foster women's active participation in business. Despite the progress, substantial regional disparities remain, particularly in the Middle East and North Africa, where structural and institutional barriers continue to limit women's entrepreneurial potential. This paper explores the global landscape of women's entrepreneurship promotion with a special focus on the institutional frameworks and policy reforms implemented in Saudi Arabia and Kazakhstan. Drawing on empirical evidence and international experiences, the study emphasizes the critical role of institutional support and gender-inclusive policy environments in fostering sustainable and impactful female entrepreneurship.

The development of women's entrepreneurship is a global priority, with numerous countries and international organizations implementing various strategies and initiatives to support women in business. The United Nations (UN) actively participates in promoting women's entrepreneurship and expanding their economic opportunities through diverse programs, initiatives, and agencies. These global efforts aim to ensure gender equality and women's rights in the business world. The UN supports policy changes that promote gender equality and women's entrepreneurship at both national and international levels, encouraging countries to adopt laws and regulations that foster a gender-equal business environment.

The UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) plays a central role in expanding women's economic opportunities, including the development of women's entrepreneurship. UN Women advances gender equality initiatives, provides technical assistance to women entrepreneurs, and protects women's economic rights. They have a specific program called "Women's Economic Empowerment" aimed at supporting women's entrepreneurship.

In collaboration with the UN Global Compact, the UN introduced the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs), which offer companies guidance on strengthening women's roles in the workplace and society. These principles promote corporate social responsibility in ensuring gender equality.

The UN's experience in developing women's entrepreneurship is broad, encompassing advocacy, research, capacity building, and collaboration with governments, organizations, and women entrepreneurs at global, regional, and national levels. The UN's programs aimed at gender equality and expanding women's economic opportunities are considered crucial factors in achieving sustainable development and human rights goals.

Institutional factors play a significant role in the development of entrepreneurial activities. These factors are generally divided into two groups:

- a) Formal institutional factors
- b) Informal institutional factors

Formal institutions include laws, business regulations, and various programs that either hinder or promote entrepreneurial activities. The role of formal institutions should be to create an attractive ecosystem for entrepreneurship. Recent empirical evidence from research indicates that effective policies and laws adopted by formal institutions to develop business activities increase the ability of newly established entrepreneurial entities to access capital more quickly, thereby creating a business-friendly environment at the national level. The stability of formal institutions positively affects the activities of social groups.

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region is noted for paying the least attention to the development of women's entrepreneurship. Based on studies conducted on women's entrepreneurship in the MENA region, three main reasons for the lack of women's involvement in entrepreneurial activities are identified:

- a) The attractiveness of public sector employment, which offers stable and sufficient income, and the lack of high-quality, well-paying jobs in the private sector.
- b) The absence of an entrepreneurial environment, with the state's reliance on natural resources exploited by large companies, which does not encourage the establishment of private and small businesses.
- c) The failure to provide women with formal employment opportunities that match their professions.

Since early 2016, the Saudi Arabian government has initiated reforms aimed at increasing entrepreneurial activity and improving the business environment. Emphasizing the enhancement of market dynamics and the creation of efficient transaction processes, the government introduced an online system for easily obtaining licenses to engage in entrepreneurial activities. This led to an increase in the number of women entrepreneurs, as many bureaucratic barriers hindering women's participation in entrepreneurship were removed.

As part of the implementation of the "Saudi Vision 2030" program, women were granted the right to drive in 2018. This program aims to reduce Saudi Arabia's dependence on oil. The law prohibiting women from driving had long been an obstacle to their involvement in entrepreneurial activities. Changes made to these laws by the government have led to an increased role for women in the country's economy.

Currently, comprehensive reform programs and new financing and education opportunities across all sectors and industries in Saudi Arabia support the entrepreneurial activities and startup projects of over a million small and medium-sized enterprises. Reforming the business environment and changing attitudes toward entrepreneurship have been key to this development. According to the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) 2021-2022 report on women's entrepreneurship in Saudi Arabia, 95% of Saudi women view entrepreneurship as a good career choice, 93% see opportunities to start new businesses, and 90% believe starting a business is easy.

Two-thirds of women living in Saudi Arabia are under the age of 35. Therefore, the "Saudi Vision 2030" program aims to create one million jobs for women in both the public and private sectors. Consequently, a series of reforms are being implemented to create richer economic opportunities for women, facilitate their entry into the labor market, and enable them to play a significant role in the country's future economic development. Currently, Saudi women constitute 37% of the workforce in the kingdom.

Saudi Arabia is effectively implementing several reforms to develop women's entrepreneurship. Through extensive institutional measures that have successfully changed the cultural norms of Saudi women in business and entrepreneurship, reforms aimed at promoting women's activity for economic development are yielding significant results. Some of these include:

- Promoting women's entrepreneurship by ensuring gender equality in access to financial services.
- Issuing driver's licenses to women.
- Establishing the "Qadriyah" program (Women's Leadership Program) by Mohammad bin Salman to develop women's leadership skills and provide them with advanced global practices in this field.
- Introducing simplified business procedures for businesswomen and establishing business centers for women.
- Creating opportunities for women to register trademarks, select business names, engage in freelancing, and register business agencies online.
- Developing business accelerators and incubators in the ICT sector to enhance women's knowledge of available opportunities, provide training in digital technologies, and improve existing skills and competencies, enabling women entrepreneurs in ICT to create innovations and launch their projects. As a result, the attractiveness of entrepreneurship for women has increased.
- The number of Saudi women working in the technology sector is rapidly growing, even surpassing the number of women in Europe and Silicon Valley. While creating more jobs in the technology sector is important to showcase the talents of women in this field, Saudi women are establishing their own tech startups.

- Providing women with opportunities to hold high-level diplomatic positions to strengthen, support, and encourage their role in society, as well as to boost their self-confidence. For instance, Jood Al-Kharti became the first woman appointed as a political affairs officer at the Executive Office of the UN Secretary-General in New York.
- The "Wusool" program, offered by the "Hadaq" company, provides financial assistance and transportation services in collaboration with community-licensed transport applications, enabling women to work, increase their participation in the labor market, and support job stability. This program offers women access to high-quality and affordable transportation services.
- The "Women Spark" program has helped thousands of young Saudi women acquire modern knowledge necessary for success in the IT field. This program covers technical and software training, as well as education related to entrepreneurship in this sector. In the first three years, in partnership with Microsoft, the program provided education to over 37,000 Saudi women. The development of such programs has been highly effective in enhancing women's modern knowledge and skills in this field and in developing startup projects.

The effectiveness of the reforms being implemented in Saudi Arabia can be seen in the following achievements:

- According to the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology of Saudi Arabia, the registration of commercial activities for women entrepreneurs increased by 112% in 2021 compared to 2015, with 139,754 new commercial licenses issued, representing one of the highest growth rates globally.
- The participation rate of women in the IT sector in Saudi Arabia rose from 11% in 2017 to 24% in 2021, surpassing Silicon Valley by 8%.
- Due to increased educational expenditures for women, Saudi women now own 40% of digital entrepreneurs, clearly demonstrating the development of women's entrepreneurship in Saudi Arabia.
- According to official data, Saudi women manage 45% of small and medium-sized enterprises in the country. Women from all corners of the kingdom are becoming the driving force behind Saudi Arabia's growing SME sector.

International organizations also recognize the legal and economic reforms being carried out in Saudi Arabia to develop women's entrepreneurship. As a result of these reforms, Saudi Arabia was included in the GEM's Women Entrepreneurship Index in 2016.

Kazakhstan is one of the Central Asian countries actively supporting women's entrepreneurship.

Since gaining independence, the Kazakh government has paid significant attention to the development of small businesses and private entrepreneurship. Initially, in 1992, Kazakhstan adopted the law "

Women's entrepreneurship is a powerful catalyst for economic transformation, innovation, and gender parity. As illustrated by the experiences of Saudi Arabia and Kazakhstan, comprehensive policy reforms, targeted support mechanisms, and institutional innovation can significantly enhance women's economic empowerment. Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 and Kazakhstan's "Business Roadmap" programs demonstrate how integrating women into national development agendas fosters inclusive growth and sustainable development. The success of such efforts, however, hinges on continued investment in education, skills development, access to finance, and institutional reform. A global commitment to dismantling structural barriers and expanding opportunities for women entrepreneurs is essential for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and building resilient economies. Future policies must be inclusive, data-driven, and tailored to the specific needs of women across diverse socioeconomic contexts.

4. Conclusion

Women's entrepreneurship is a powerful catalyst for economic transformation, innovation, and gender parity. As illustrated by the experiences of Saudi Arabia and Kazakhstan, comprehensive policy reforms, targeted support mechanisms, and institutional innovation can significantly enhance women's economic empowerment. Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 and Kazakhstan's "Business Roadmap" programs demonstrate how integrating women into national development agendas fosters inclusive growth and sustainable development. The success of such efforts, however, hinges on continued investment in education, skills development, access to finance, and institutional reform. A global commitment to dismantling structural barriers and expanding opportunities for women entrepreneurs is essential for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and building resilient economies. Future policies must be inclusive, data-driven, and tailored to the specific needs of women across diverse socioeconomic contexts.

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