03/11/2022

Professor Maryann Feldman
Editor

Research Policy

Subject: Response to Referee Report on MS. Ref. No.: RESPOL-D-20-00402R4
Title: How and Why Accelerators Enhance Female Entrepreneurship

Dear Editor,

I am delighted to submit our revised manuscript, entitled “How and Why Accelerators Enhance Female Entrepreneurship”, authored by Eyal Rechter and myself, after making revisions following the reviewers’ comments on our last draft.

We are deeply thankful for the opportunity you gave us to improve the manuscript and for recognizing its potential, and for your patience during the many revisions. It was a challenging but inspiring process that taught us a lot. We are also thankful for your choice of reviewers, who provided in-depth feedback, balancing criticism with encouragement in a way that greatly pushed us – and the manuscript – forward. It was an educational experience for which we are absolutely grateful.

As you mentioned in the header of the last review report, the main issues in the reviewers’ last round of comments were referee #1’s urging to improve the analyses and referee #2’s encouragement to clarify our arguments and findings. We addressed this issue via two main changes:

**Considering referee #1 problem with the analysis.**

We now got to the bottom of referee #2’s arguments and made adaptations and revisions accordingly. First, we clarify that the novelty in the paper lies not in identifying the gender differences which are well known. Instead, we examine them merely to reconfirm them in our context and data and focus on investigating whether accelerators can compensate for these differences. We further consider whether accelerators are more helpful for women because they are more adapted to gender itself, or because they are more adapted to founders with similar background conditions (weaker entrepreneurial human capital, fewer networks, less ESE, lower legitimacy, and initial-stage businesses) that typically characterize women. We argue and present evidence that it is mostly due to the context (female founders often enter accelerators with less favorable background conditions). Based on this understanding, we revised the Discussion section to reflect our argument.

Second, regarding data analysis, we improved the presentation, but based on yours and both referees' comments, we did not add analyses but rather emphasize the ones that we have and replaced the moderation figures with a more reader-friendly

**Considering referee #2 comments.**

We improved the presentation of the empirical analysis as asked.

Referee #2 comment on the ESE definition.

Despite our continuous efforts to be clear about ESE and confidence, the comments of both referees indicated that the use of these terms in the manuscript was still not clear. While both referees raised this issue, their suggestions as to how to resolve the issue were in some contradiction. Referee #1 recommended we focus on only ESE as the theoretical construct of interest and explain our measure (which validity they accept) refers to confidence but taps into ESE. Referee #2, in contrast, suggested we keep both terms but further clarify the distinction between them. Given that our previous efforts failed to make a clear distinction, as the literature often mixes ESE and confidence, we chose to follow the recommendation of referee #1 and avoid confusion, sticking to ESE as the theoretical construct and elaborating on our approximate measure of it through the question regarding confidence.

Regarding reviewer#2 suggestion to further develop the discussion on NGO and social venture findings, we decided to keep it for a future paper.

We wrote: “QUOTE FROM LETTER.”

Finally, we adopted the referees’ comments related to improving the clarity of our arguments and findings.

Maryann, as you wrote us that only you will read our current revision and comments to the review report, we would be grateful if you could pass on to the referees the following messages. We feel obliged and wish to convey our sincere gratitude.

For Referee #1

We should like to express our sincere appreciation for the review process we underwent. We deeply appreciate the time and effort you put into reading the manuscript and the revisions, the extensive feedback, and the most valuable comments. We did not always initially accepted (or fully understood) your comments but came to realize that they are in place, and we have learned a lot from the process, which will also serve us in the future. We are really thankful for the evident effort to elaborate on and explain the points you made.

For Referee #2

We are deeply thankful for the confidence you expressed from the first draft of the manuscript, together with your insistence on improving the work and the scientific rigor of the research. Your feedback was most valuable, and your style was empowering and encouraging throughout the long process, which most significantly increased the level of the paper. We have learned a lot about doing great research and also how to write reviews in a motivating and supportive way. We are wholeheartedly thankful!

Sincerely,

Gil Avnimelech, PhD