15/06/2021

Professor Maryann Feldman
Editor

Research Policy

Subject: Response to Referee Report on MS. Ref. No.: RESPOL-D-20-00402R1
Title: Accelerators as a Tool for Enhancing Female Entrepreneurship

Dear Editor,

I am delighted to submit our revised manuscript, titled “Accelerators as a Tool for Enhancing Female Entrepreneurship”, authored by Eyal Rechter and myself, after making considerable revisions following the reviewers’ comments on our last draft.

We are excited with the improvements that we have made, feeling the manuscript is evolving into a fine paper that will be of high interest and relevance to the literature on female entrepreneurship and the immerging literature on startup accelerators.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to the three reviewers. It is evident that they have high expertise in the content material, their reading it thorough and their comments highly valuable for us. They help us considerably to improve the manuscript and we are grateful for each and every one of them.

Since their comments and suggestions were extensive, addressing them required substantial revisions in the manuscript. Below, we summarized the main changes we made in the manuscript.

Attached to this letter are:

1. A point-by-point response letter to the reviewers’ comments, beginning with a general overview of the main changes and an exploratory note.
2. An appendix with additional analyses that are not (or partially) reported in the manuscript and might be of interest to you and the reviewers.
3. The revised manuscript.

We also want to thank you for recognizing the potential of the paper in the first draft and giving us the chance to improve the manuscript.

Sincerely,

Gil Avnimelech, PhD

**An overall review of the changes in the current version of the manuscript Accelerators as a Tool for Enhancing Female Entrepreneurship**

**Introduction:**

As reviewer#2 suggested, we now emphasize our initial finding regarding women participation in Israeli accelerators (more than double than in the general population of startups in Israel) as our starting point. To maintain focus and clarity, we omitted the discussion of different types of accelerators and present this data without breaking it down.

We extended and updated our literature review, better connecting our arguments to existing theories and findings, and framed our contribution to the literature more explicitly (bringing together the various barriers to female entrepreneurship and highlighting their inter-relations, demonstrating that accelerators might assist in addressing these barriers through linking accelerators’ design to the barriers, building and using our unique dataset of accelerator participants in Israel, and demonstrating the impact and value of accelerators).

As reviewer#2 and reviewer#3 suggested, we added access to capital as a fifth distinct barrier to female entrepreneurs. This includes literature review on this barrier, presenting accelerator's role in mitigating this barrier and developing hypotheses regarding this barrier.

We also made sure the barriers to female entrepreneurship are clearly defined, expanded our discussion of entrepreneurial self-efficacy and confidence, and emphasized the inter-relations among the five barriers to female entrepreneurship.

Finally, we elaborated more on accelerators, discussing their assistance in access to capital, and made a clearer distinction between accelerators and incubators.

**Materials and Method:**

The reviewers’ comments clarified that the focus of the paper was not clear enough. To make it more coherent, we omitted measures and data that were not directly related to our main theme and our hypotheses:

1) Discussion of accelerator typologies – we now discuss the overall pattern of women participation to provide a clearer overview of our findings.

2) Participants’ satisfaction from the program – we now focus on outcomes that are directly related to our hypotheses and theoretical review.

3) Some of the background and control variables – we stick now to a limited number of variables whose relevance is clear.

In addition, we improved the structure of the paper to make it more logic and focused.

As data collection was still in progress, we updated sample size (*N* = 779).

Clearer and more detailed and precise description of our measures (especially clarifying and distinct between entrepreneurial self-efficacy, for which we included a new measure, and confidence), including new measures of access to capital, according to the hypotheses.

Data analysis:

1) We revised and simplified our regression analyses to included a limited number of theoretically relevant controls, and avoid stepwise method.

2) We added interaction analyses to complement the regressions and probe gender differences in the outcome variables.

3) We refer to both regression and interaction analyses as complementary to our main hypotheses testing.

**Results:**

We updated all analyses with the additional observations.

We restructured this section to correspond to the hypotheses, starting with direct hypotheses testing (most of them supported) and following with the complementary regressions and interactions.

Regression analyses show that for half of the outcome variables, gender effect did not explain additional variance in the outcome variable. Startup stage (i.e., being at the idea stage) was a strong predictor for most outcomes.

Followingly, the interaction analyses examine the moderation of gender on the startup stage-outcome associations, showing that gender moderated the effect for network goal and progress and for ESE and legitimacy progress.

**Discussion**

We focused and expanded the discussion, emphasizing the importance of our findings and their implications, better relating them to the literature on gender and female entrepreneurship, and that of accelerators.

We link our findings to the current debate of advantages and disadvantages of women-focused/dedicated vs. women-friendly accelerators as means to advancing female-owned businesses; and we explain how our results might solve the ambiguity regarding the role of accelerators in reducing the gender gap in entrepreneurship. We believe that these last two topics, that are becoming focal issues in the literature, make our paper a good fit to these immerging trends.