

Chapter 12

Women Entrepreneurs, Personal Constraints, and Resilience Behavior Within the Context of COVID-19

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ABSTRACT

As most research on the impact of the pandemic on women's entrepreneurship has focused on businesses, on the behavior of women entrepreneurs (WE) in relation to the management of their businesses and entrepreneurial resilience, this chapter looks to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the emergence of resilience behaviors of WE in the private sphere. It examines the issue of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the social roles of WE, their responsibilities in the family sphere, their personal finances, their mental health, and the time they spend on their business, all topics that are not yet addressed in the scientific literature.

INTRODUCTION

Despite some warnings in October 2019 in certain European countries such as France and the first confirmed cases of Covid-19 officially reported in January 2020, it was only on 11 March that the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the global spread of the pandemic disease caused by a new coronavirus. In March 2020, high levels of contamination led several countries' governments in the world to confine their populations several times over in order to "stop an exponential spread of the coronavirus and the number of people affected" (Richomme-Huet, 2022).

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The global disruption of covid-19 was unexpected, although predictable as a possible situation linked to previous crises (SARS, H1N1, MERS, etc.); the covid-19 pandemic has undeniable human, economic and social consequences (Richomme-Huet, 2022), which are extremely serious in some cases.

Some reports suggest that the pandemic has a gender. According to the McKinsey & Company report “Women in the Workplace 2020”, which examines the impact of the covid-19 pandemic on women in their relationship to work, women have been particularly negatively affected. The review of scientific literature and reports on the status of women suggest that the advent of the pandemic represents a threat to women and their gains in the world of work. A report by the International Labor Organization (ILO) Observatory (2021) on the covid-19 pandemic in the world of work states that the situation created by this pandemic has reversed previous gains and worsened existing inequalities between men and women. It has occurred in three areas: health, economic and productivity (Fita Ortega, 2022). The consequences of preventive measures have slowed or stopped the global economy, national labor markets and, ultimately, the status of women. Indeed, this pandemic affects the health of individuals, their relationship to the economy and their social life in all countries of the world (Richomme-Huet, 2022).

Several authors support the idea that domestic work and women’s social roles are putting the question of gender equality in relation to work back on the table as a result of the covid-19 pandemic. Taking on these responsibilities leads to the “voluntary acceptance” of part-time work, reduced working hours, jobs without responsibilities, and even exclusion from the labor market. This has obvious implications for gender inequality in the workplace, as it leads to a reduction in the number of women in the workforce. Another reason could be the existence of a ‘glass ceiling’ for women’s careers. Employers are wary of insecure workers and therefore tend to promote men to positions of responsibility. The pandemic has also highlighted the occupational gender differences and the difficulties women face when working at a distance. For instance, an analysis of the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development clearly shows that gender equality is at the bottom of the progress scale (Fita Ortega, 2022). Fita Ortega (2022) develops other possible reasons why the pandemic has had a significant impact on women’s employment: firstly, the sectors most affected (catering, education and domestic services) are those with the highest numbers of women and therefore the highest unemployment rates. Secondly, the pandemic has excluded mainly women from the labor market, as the demand for domestic and care work has increased. Although previous surveys show that men have increased their participation in general domestic work (cleaning, childcare, shopping, laundry, etc.), this does not balance the increase in unpaid work resulting from the pandemic. The same applies to maintenance work. In this context, the ILO report “Covid-19 and the world of work” points out that the closure of childcare centers, social services and schools, combined with the inability of older people to contribute to domestic work, has increased the demand for domestic work and care in the family sphere during the crisis. The situation of single-parent families is even more serious, as 78.4% of all single-parent families worldwide are women. As a result, women, who already have more household and care responsibilities, work more than men.

In the singular context of covid-19, Richomme-Huet (2022) highlights the direct and indirect consequences, both economic and social, and discusses the combined effects of sanitary disease, business and family on women’s self-employment. Thus, the covid-19 pandemic has affected women, as individuals, as wives, as mothers, as housewives, as employees or as self-employed, in terms of their physical and mental health, their income, their employment and/or their domestic work. Despite such changes, the impact of the covid-19 pandemic on the social roles of women entrepreneurs (WE), on their responsibilities in the family sphere, on their personal finances and on the time they spend on their business are topics that are not yet addressed in the scientific literature. Although the importance of focusing on

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