

The Business of Women:
Entrepreneurial Politics in Latin America

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Q: What are the legal and political differences between Peru and Bolivia that affect women's engagement in women's entrepreneurship?

Abstract

In appreciating women's role in entrepreneurship and the development of the world economy, this paper examines the legal and political differences between Peru and Bolivia that affect women's engagement in entrepreneurship. Historically, women's entrepreneurial potential has been undermined in the global business arena, particularly in developing countries such as Bolivia and Peru. Understanding such a gender gap needs not only a grasp of history but also legal, political, and cultural barriers towards women's engagement in business. The study points to the gender significance in business, demonstrating that women have been disadvantaged as opposed to their male counterparts with the institutional structures, such as the existing laws and policies. Furthermore, the study points that corruption is a great challenge in business, particularly, when it comes to an individual trying to engage in the existing policies and legal guidelines in entrepreneurship. Such challenges affect women's participation in Bolivia and Peru, where the policy and legal formulation and conduct have been dominated by the patriarchal society. Therefore, corruption and a strongly patriarchal society hinders women's engagement in business in Bolivia and Peru. Politically, the study identifies that women in Bolivia and Peru are undermined by the government structure, thus, there is a challenge for women empowerment when it comes to engaging in leadership or business.

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Entrepreneurship is a general terminology with different uses across various disciplines. Bogdanovic & Cakic (2017) defined entrepreneurship "as a process through which new knowledge is transformed into products and services, which can be sold." Therefore, an entrepreneur is a person who undertakes the responsibility of running and operating a new

venture and accepts accountability for the risks thereof. Every entrepreneur goes to the market with a specific interest. Entrepreneurial efforts are regulated by different interest groups, especially legal lobbyists and policymakers. Tang & Tang (1999) defined entrepreneurial politics as the rise of different “groups promoting policies that benefit the general public in opposition to the interests of concentrated and organized groups.” Women’s engagement in the sector of entrepreneurship is critical in developing the economies of various countries, and this paradigm would consequently impact the growth and development of the world economy (Croce, 2019, July 27). However, several issues and challenges have been preventing women across the globe from participating adequately in the paradigm of the global business. This approach is rooted in ancient culture when many labor markets worldwide did not fully participate in entrepreneurship. It is very critical for the countries worldwide to have a comprehensive understanding that a vital lens reveals that the participation of women in entrepreneurship is essential for the development of various countries, especially for developing countries like Bolivia and Peru (Croce, 2019, July 27). Even the developed countries worldwide, such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Germany, agree that women's participation in entrepreneurship is very effective. Even though such countries agree that women's adequate involvement in global entrepreneurship, it is evident that many factors have created the gender inequalities to afford fewer privileges to women in the entrepreneurship sector; this study aims to discuss the legal and political differences between Peru and Bolivia that affect women's engagement in women’s entrepreneurship.

Over several decades ago, there were legal and political inequalities that forced many women across the world to back away from entrepreneurship (Shastri et al., 2019). This is widespread in developing countries; Peru and Bolivia are no exceptions. The measurements of

understanding how women are impacted by the provisions of various legal and political differences that affect their engagement in entrepreneurship are very complex (Shastri et al., 2019). The inequalities would depend on multiple governments, authorities, and local cultures that have been considered to have caused a critical gender gap in discriminating women against men in the entrepreneurship spectrum. Studying the provision of legalities, politics, and promoting gender inequality in business is an essential approach to all countries across the globe: both developing and developed countries (Shastri et al., 2019). Like many countries worldwide, Peru and Bolivia have been experiencing gender inequality in terms of women's participation in entrepreneurship. Understanding the problem's scope is very critical in ensuring that the weakness of such legal and political provisions and potential measures would be easily found. This study will explore several inequalities of difference in legal systems and political systems that hinder women's participation in entrepreneurship in Peru and Bolivia.

Gender Significance

There has been a growing awareness of the gender dimension to entrepreneurship and an increasing realization, among policymakers and practitioners alike, that gender-blind business support measures do not support women's enterprise development to the extent that they support its male equivalent (Croce, 2019, July 27). Gender-blind businesses “embrace peoples, rules, and particular institutional contexts” that disadvantage one gender over the other (Croce, 2019, July 27). These gender-blind policies are anchored on traditional patriarchy and colonial policies that disadvantaged minority communities. In this regard, Croce (2019) records that indigenous women face a similar discrimination status to those men faced during the colonial era. Croce's extensive thematic literature review Indigenous Women Entrepreneurship (IWE) through the

scope of sociology, anthropology, entrepreneurship, and management presents evidence showing that gender disparities can hinder economic growth, facilitate an increase in poverty rates and undermine well-being outcomes for men and women alike in the World Bank. Research on female entrepreneurs indicates that they are adversely affected by the social, cultural, and institutional environments (Croce, 2019, July 27). Increasing the number of women entrepreneurs who have innovative, growth-oriented businesses would produce more significant and broader economic benefits through new product or service development and job creation. By developing targeted initiatives, public policy can facilitate growth-oriented women entrepreneurs' development by removing or reducing gendered barriers (Croce, 2019, July 27). Though it's challenging to identify which entrepreneurs will successfully grow their businesses, research has shown that some characteristics such as a college education and business growth aspirations are positively associated with business outcomes.

Corruption

Corruption is cutting across various levers such as age, gender, religion, race, and social status, among other spectrums of societal construction. Since the definition of corruption has significant influence from social construction, this paper defines corruption as the economic challenges to entrepreneurial engagement manifesting through unnecessary and expensive bureaucracies and overlooking merit and legal guidelines over individual economic benefits. Corruption issues are a matter of international concern: both developing and developed countries struggle to address the challenges caused by corruption (Scott, 2012, November 19). The problems of corruption have hindered many people in business in developing countries regardless of being a woman or a man. However, according to researchers, the available

literature has not proven that corruption is either rampant in developing or developed countries. Inadequate data on the level and status of corruption in different countries is the main challenge to addressing the inherent challenges to doing business in these countries. This is a serious challenge that needs a global all-inclusive approach for potential intervention. Thus, corruption has negatively affected women's participation in entrepreneurship in both Peru and Bolivia ; Owing to traditional patriarchy and colonial policies that disadvantaged marginal groups, women have little representation at senior policy-making organs (Scott, 2012, November 19). Thus, women's voices and determination to engage in entrepreneurial ventures stands challenged. Corruption in the two countries has been known to take either political or legal dimension, and these entire spectrums have the potential to hinder the efforts by women to exploit the entrepreneurship sector.

Just like any other country around the world, Peru has been affected by corruption. This spectrum is considered to prevent many citizens from venturing into business regardless of gender or other sociological constructions due to the expensive bureaucratic processes available to the rich and veteran entrepreneurs (Schaposchnik, 2020). Political and legal corruption has been part of Peruvian history (Vergara & Watanabe, 2016, July). The typical case of corruption in the court concerns the Fujimori government (Schaposchnik, 2020). During his ten years in power, Fujimori was convicted of corruption, including embezzling \$15 million from the Peruvian treasury to settle his chief of intelligence, different cases of murder, causing bodily harm, and kidnapping (Heuser, 2018). The form of corruption in Peru is fraud, bribes, improper use of funds, scandals, and favor seeking. According to experts, the Peruvian governments have exposed women to corruption twice the rates at which men are exposed to such a phenomenon (Heuser, 2018). Through the dynamics of corruption in the country, women have lost cases raised

in the Peruvian legal system and have been forced to close down several businesses because they lose points of such business in court due to corruption. Given the nature of the government system in the country, women are exposed to more corruption than men. This has prevented many of them from starting a business, or rather, many women in Peru have resolved to shut down their business because of injustices due to corruption.

Corruption in Bolivia has been a significant challenge in the country, and many people have nowadays considered it to be part of life in the country (MacLean-Abaroa, 2019). This is despite the severe economic impacts that corruption has confronted the country. Corruption in Bolivia can be found in all stages or types of society. Bolivia's citizens believe that the police, the judiciary, and the public administration are the most corrupt in the country (MacLean-Abaroa, 2019). However, the challenges of corruption in the country crucially affect women that it could do to men. This observation is explainable through reference to historical structural inequalities. In the 1950s and 60s, a wave of feminist revolutionaries started to challenge male dominance in different fields. Croce (2019) records that gender, class, and ethnicity aspects disadvantaged women, and the little successes of the 1970s feminist movements did not affect the marginalized and minority groups. Thus, women from marginalized regions like Peru and Bolivia remained significantly left out in entrepreneurial development. The spectrum of gender inequality is part of the dynamics of corruption in the country. Many women have closed their businesses or have failed to start specific businesses because many of the country's political and legal systems are corrupt (MacLean-Abaroa, 2019), because the historical disenfranchisement of women as minorities has denied them space within the corrupt masculine society. At the same time, the higher levels of corruption in the country has impacted the country's economy negatively, including rising the cost of living as money meant for development is hooded to support private

capitalistic ventures. The 2020 Transparency International report on Peru showed that 65% of Peruvians believed that corruption cases had increased within the past year, while over 30% had given a bribe within the same period. Corruption is both an economic and religious crime, and women mainly find it hard to do it due to their religiosity or due inadequate financial implication in securing worthwhile bribes. Consequently, the women have found it hard to acquire the capital to start their choice businesses (Ventura & Jauregui, 2017, January). Corruption in Bolivia is present at almost every level of society. The cost of living has gone up. Generally, starting a new business in the country has been a significant hurdle for many, more so the women due to their minority status. Thus, many women in Bolivia have failed to effectively and adequately venture into business due to corruption.

Women's Empowerment

The low number of women's engagement in women's entrepreneurship lends itself to critical issues. This is not only due to the political climate of the country addressed but also due to the legal barriers and economic factors of the country. Discussions of women's empowerment suggest three components: resources, agency, and achievements (Waldron, 2017, April 17). Resources and agency make up women's capabilities, and accomplishments refer to the extent to which their potential is realized (Ventura & Jauregui, 2017, January). Agency refers to the ability to exercise choice in ways that challenge power relations. One way power relations can be challenged through women's increased political representation, especially since women's political representation remains relatively low in Bolivia and Peru. Increasing women's political representation means overcoming the traditional characterization of women as unable to run,

lead and do business. Again, having more women in leadership positions will challenge the discriminative policies that inhibit them from full participation in economic ventures.

Land Title Policy

The significance of land is different for men and women. Druschke & Secchi (2014), who examined landownership attitudes among men and women in Iowa State in a cross-sectional study that included 6500 respondents, observed that women have limited experience in land preservation. This observation implies that women use the land to meet immediate needs (survival) while men preserve land as a sign of social status, power and wealth. The Druschke & Secchi (2014) study further revealed a good gap between women's property rights and their actual ownership of the property. A significant factor to this limitation of ownership was the restricted nature of married women's property rights.

For generations, property rights had little practical meaning to large segments of Peru's population because a few owners held the vast majority of private lands (Ducoing et al., 2018, March 26). The interests of nearly all women in maintaining legal title to real property (land and buildings) were essentially disregarded or less involved in business than men. Rich women and the poor were left off land titles and other property-related documents. Land-titling efforts began in the late 1980s and continued to bring attention to gender equality in property rights. Legally married couples are obliged to identify and include their spouses when registering property. Women are not allowed to fight this clause, and whether they provide proof of domestic violence, which 50% of Peruvian women experience, they are denied (Ducoing et al., 2018, March 26) the right to property ownership.

In Bolivia, women in urban areas face many struggles related to infrastructure and paternalistic society structures (Martinelli & Vega, 2018). One significant problem they faced was insecure land tenure (CoLab for Change, 2021, February 23). Up until recently, women in Bolivia had not been recognized in titles of land ownership. Only a husband or male partner was mentioned in the official documents by name with no legal recognition for his wife or female partner. If the husband or man passed away or left, women had no secure tenure and legally no rights to the land and property they lived on (CoLab for Change, 2021 February 23). Habitat for Humanity International started a campaign to recognize women as landowners in Bolivia legally. In March 2012, women leaders from this project proposed a change to the Plurinational Assembly (Bolivia's national legislative body) regarding the land tenure law in Bolivia to recognize women's land rights (Philipp, 2020, September 29). The proposal was successfully passed by Bolivia's legislature a few months later. Couples can now have their properties officially mapped and registered with the local government and can have their legal documents updated. Thus far, many people have updated their land titles so that now both partners are legally registered as landowners.

Why are land titles important? Validated evidence of actual property ownership has been correlated with the availability to work more hours each week due to greater confidence in the security of ownership and more entrepreneurship. Documented ownership of real property can and should make a meaningful difference in women's ability to establish and grow enterprises.

Gender-Specific Laws

The legislative obstacles that impede women's success in business are also evident in countries like Bolivia, which have marriage laws that require women to seek their husbands'

permission before engaging in any nature of business. According to Thompson's article posted on the World Economic Forum on November 15, 2015, the World Bank's report had recorded that 155 out of 173 analyzed countries had policies that impeded women's economic opportunities. Bolivia was among "the 18 countries where women need to ask permission" from their husbands to engage in any economic activity. This is a drawback to the effort women invest in entrepreneurship. In the spirit of equity, women, just like men, should have the freedom and liberty to engage in profit-oriented ventures without having to solicit approval from their partners (Sengupta & Aubuchon, 2008, January). For women to start a business in Bolivia, they must first obtain permission from a spouse to start a business or leave home to register the company and receive any gender-specific document for company registration and operation. To acquire these gender-specific documents, the spouse must be present, which he is not due to the cultural attitude towards women in business in Bolivia (Sengupta & Aubuchon, 2008, January).

Peru is one of the best countries for women entrepreneurs in Latin America. However, better access to bank finance would help them grow their businesses and contribute much more to growth and job creation, according to the Multilateral Investment Fund, a member of the Inter-American Development Bank Group. Starting a business in Peru is much easier for women than in Bolivia. I realized that the primary gender-specific law that affected women tremendously was not yet in place for Peru. In Peru, wages between men and women were significantly high. However, wage gaps vary due to the position applied, education, and status. Peru has narrowed their wage gap substantially. With women and men in very similar situations, from 1987-1997, the wage gap difference was 60% (Pasquali, 2019, September 16). Men were getting paid 60% more, and nothing was being done by the Peruvian government (Pasquali, 2019, September 16). Although there were women's movements to close this gap, they did not

reach enough attention. Only in 2017 did the legislature pass a law to prohibit pay discrimination between men and women. In 2020, the wage gap in Peru between men and women decreased to approximately 33% (Pasquali, 2019, September 16). This contributes to women's engagement in entrepreneurship because women can now be more productive and be on the same playing level as their male counterparts. Not only would this increase productivity, but innovation as well.

Women's Access to Capital

Women across Peru require capital to invest, and not just in their enterprises. They also require the means to invest in themselves and their families: improving their homes, completing their education, or paying for their children's education (Ducoing et al., 2018, March 26). As in most economies, primary sources of capital resources are considered even before someone seeks funds from banks, and other lenders or investors include real and personal property, wage earnings, revenue from work, and entrepreneurship. In Peru, these primary sources have worked unequally for men and women (Ducoing et al., 2018, March 26). With Peru having strict land title laws, it is more challenging for women to acquire capital or loans due to a lack of property ownership.

In Bolivia, women have limited capital access due to the length and required documents needed with a spouse (W. (2020)). The legislative obstacles that impede women's success in business are also evident in countries like Bolivia, which have marriage laws that require women to seek their husbands' permission before engaging in any nature of business. This is a drawback to the effort women invests in entrepreneurship. In the spirit of equity, women, just like men, should have the freedom and liberty to engage in profit-oriented ventures without having to solicit approval from their partners. For women to start a business in Bolivia, they must first

obtain approval from a spouse to start a business or leave home to register the company and obtain any gender-specific document for company registration and operation or national identification card. To acquire these gender-specific documents, the spouse must be present, which he is not due to the cultural attitude towards women in business in Bolivia. Bolivia's business is significantly in mining; therefore, most apply for construction permits. However, the average age women get married in Bolivia is 25 years (Ducoing et al., 2018, March 26). Many women don't start a business until later in their 30's. This puts them already at a disadvantage as the average woman in Bolivia gets married at 25 years old. One must do many different procedures to acquire a construction permit, which all involve lengthy meetings and paperwork. Not to mention each process takes an average of 3 weeks to finish. Due to the Bolivian historical machismo way of thinking, men are unlikely to help women access permits or capital (Philipp, 2020, September 29).

Fiscal Policy

A fiscal policy states how a government collects and uses public resources to affect macro and microeconomic performance. Fiscal policy is very critical in determining the level at which women are involved in entrepreneurship worldwide. The countries with effective fiscal policies have experienced drastic development in the economy (Ducoing et al., 2018, March 26). Giant economies worldwide, such as the United States, have been prosperous since they have managed to develop their economy. Therefore, Peru and Bolivia's fiscal policies have essential effects on the two countries' economies and women's participation in entrepreneurship (Ducoing et al., 2018, March 26).

Peruvian aims to succeed in terms of growth and poverty reduction require a more comprehensive evaluation of its economic levers. The government needs to achieve sound fiscal practices to ensure that they guarantee social rights and sustainable growth. The Peruvian budgetary policies and budgetary policies are considered to deprive citizens of business (Martinelli & Vega, 2018). The country's fiscal policies have hindered the efforts made by women to start their companies, and as a result, many women have resolved to denounce their plans to create or maintain various businesses. Generally, Peru's fiscal policies and business laws have considerably increased women's participation in entrepreneurship (Martinelli & Vega, 2018).

On the other side, women in Bolivia have also been greatly affected by the fiscal policies: the budgetary policies in Bolivia have made many women stop starting up a various business, and some have also opted to halt the operation of the existing business since the current fiscal policies are not in their favor (González Zuazo & Molina Fernández, 2017). There is a little allocation from the central government to support women's participation in entrepreneurship. It is in the history of Bolivia that its fiscal policies led to critical hyperinflation in the early 1980s (González Zuazo & Molina Fernández, 2017). The budgetary deficit emerged as the public sector took advantage of the windfalls and many other aspects of the economy. As we speak, Bolivia is still facing fiscal deficits, and this is one of the most significant challenges that are affecting many women in the country, especially their effort to participate in the entrepreneurship sector (Philipp, 2020, September 29). Women are structurally disadvantaged by the fiscal policies in Bolivia than men (e.g., women must get permission to get a job), which is why women find it harder to start a new business in Bolivia than men. To ensure that the country attains gender equality in entrepreneurship participation, the government of Bolivia should involve the citizens

in robust strategies that would help the country establish the most effective fiscal policies that will promote gender parity.

Regulations in Business

Regulations in business have been critical challenges that affected the participation of women in business across the globe (Aguirre, & Alonso, 2020). Many of the business regulations in Peru and Bolivia have been a significant determinant in gender participation in the country's businesses. For example, women cannot freely start and run a business enterprise because present regulations in Bolivia demand that women must seek their husband's approval to start a business. Regulations that do not consider the importance of gender equality are hazardous in a nation's growth.

Even though many women are already operating a business in Peru, the country needs to reconsider a lot to ensure that its business regulations are bearable to the citizens regardless of gender, age or religion, (Aguirre, & Alonso, 2020). For example, since Peru and Bolivia are patriarchal societies owing to the historical characterization of women as minorities, Croce (2019) records that women's activism has not yielded significant positive results. Peru and Bolivia have not enacted affirmative regulations to cushion women against a rather biased and oppressive society. The business laws of Peru include the areas of business registration, taxation, and regulations. These regulations have been confirmed to hinder various efforts made by women to participate in entrepreneurship, primarily through the lengthy and expensive procedures in registration and licensing. Therefore, to ensure gender parity in the Peruvian entrepreneurship sector, the government needs to review the business regulations to make them

indiscriminate in terms of gender, such as establishing a committee or ministry dealing specifically with solving gender challenges and accessing economic opportunities.

Given the business laws in Bolivia, the country is considered one of the most challenging places in the world to start a business. This is because the country's business laws create difficult situations for local and foreign groups to start a business especially due to the lengthy and costly registration and licensing procedures (Dávalos et al., 2020). In a broad view, the difficulties in businesses in the country are also experienced with female citizens. Women in Bolivia have failed to create or sustain their businesses due to the existing businesses (Philipp, 2020, September 29). Therefore, the same way men would face difficulties opening a business in the country is how the women have been affected by such business laws (Scott, 2012, November 19). However, women are considered to have been greatly affected by the rules than men due to the traditional patriarchy and secondary treatment of women. Thus, such business regulations need to be reviewed to increase women's engagement in entrepreneurship.

Conclusion

After reviewing various literature, it is evident that the legal and political spectrum plays an essential role in the scope of women's participation in entrepreneurship across the globe. Many countries have political and legal differences that hinder women from actively participating in the business sector. Even though the same magnitude is felt by men, too, women are more susceptible. It is evident several legal and political differences affect women who are willing to participate in entrepreneurship. The legal and political spectrum that affect women's participation in business in Peru and Bolivia are myriad.

However, political representation should be considered an essential component of public policy designed to increase entrepreneurship. Assuming that countries choose to encourage entrepreneurial behavior as part of an economic growth strategy, it would be logical to support changes that lead to work-related equality. Equal political power opportunities may provide more potential for increasing women's entrepreneurship, and creating constructive societal foundations is critical for enabling the possibility of female entrepreneurs. Increasing women's access to political power will offer the necessary checks and balances on the corrupt and gender biased societies. Recognizing a supportive environment through policy changes, entrepreneurial behavior will have fertile soil to grow on. This policy change should focus on affirmative actions for women, with dedicated goodwill from the government to end corruption. Legal barriers moderate the relationship between women's political empowerment and women's entry into entrepreneurship. This supports my expectation that men's cultural attitude towards women may not help new laws or regulations passed to remove obstacles to women's entrepreneurship; informal norms can carry on indefinitely unless the state enforces the new laws. However, it would be sufficient to increase women's political representation to increase women's entrepreneurship. The legal barriers should also be weakened to maximize the effects of women's political empowerment on women's entrepreneurship.

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