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Maryam Cheraghi started her position as a PhD Research Fellow at department of Entrepreneurship and Relationship Management at University of Southern Denmark since 2014. Her research interests cover issues related to entrepreneurial activity in context of institution, especially informal institution in forms of norms and values, women entrepreneurship and gender gap in entrepreneurial activity and age effect in entry into entrepreneurship by using age theories. Maryam holds a master in IT engineering from Tarbiat Modaress University in Tehran Iran, and currently she is working as software engineer at Danske Bank. Headline/Opening: Age effect on entry into entrepreneurship: Influenced by differences in gender-egalitarianism, life-expectancy and occupation



PhD Dissertation of

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at the Department of Entrepreneurship
and Relationship Management,
University of Southern Denmark

Age effect on entry into entrepreneurship

Influenced by differences in
gender-egalitarianism, life-expectancy
and occupation

27 October 2017

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In recent decades socio-economic and demographic changes that have affected countries have also affected individuals' decision-making about their life stages. Both developed and developing countries experience these social changes and the variety of challenges posed by them at a different pace. Two examples of such change are the increased expectancy of living longer and healthier lives, and changing gender roles. Because entrepreneurship as a career path, for individuals at a young age, middle age and in later life, has a mutual relationship with such societal changes, the study of the effect of age on entrepreneurial activity has been the object of increased attention. This attention has focused on investigating how entrepreneurial activity, at different ages, is affected by social change. In a similar vein, there has been an interest in identifying how such social change may necessitate a change in policy(ies) in relation to entrepreneurial activity. According to previous studies, age as an "inherent triggering factor of entrepreneurship" (Levesque & Minniti 2006, p.178) has a universal effect on entry into entrepreneurship. Specifically, age effects on entry into entrepreneurship are seen here as the resultant consequence of two main mechanisms (accumulation of resources and change in attitude through an individual's life).

This thesis identifies three gaps in the knowledge of the relationship between age and entry into entrepreneurship.

The first gap refers to the use of age theories for conceptualizing age effect on entry into entrepreneurship.

Age theories study age effects on individuals' characteristics and life stages from different perspectives namely psychology and sociology.

The second gap refers to individuals' heterogeneity as a moderator for age effect. Individuals' characteristics i.e. "attitude, abilities, and opportunity costs" (Shepherd et al. 2015, p. 19) affect their career choices. Some of these characteristics change in a similar way throughout all individuals' lives as a consequence of the general developmental process of aging, which results in an inherent universal age effect on entry into entrepreneurship (e.g. accumulation of resources and change in individuals' risk aversion). However, specific psychological characteristics or career path moderate the general age effect on entrepreneurial activity.

The third gap refers to the embeddedness of individuals' characteristics in the environment, as well as age effect. According to the psychology and sociology of age theories, individuals' changes in attitude and social role throughout life are embedded in environmental conditions as a consequence of socialization. Moreover, individuals' response to, or effect from, the environmental context is not homogeneous, as it depends on individuals' characteristics (e.g. human capital) and contextual factors (e.g. level of development).

This dissertation contributes to filling these gaps through three research papers, which are at the heart of this thesis. The research papers were

based on unique datasets, by merging individual level data from the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor with macro-level data from the World Health Organization, World Bank and World Values Survey. By using the hypothetical-deductive method and hierarchical logistic and multinomial regression the three papers analysed the effect of age on entry into entrepreneurship; taking into account moderation, at both the micro and macro levels.

By using life-span and life course theories, and developing a conceptual framework based on switching costs theory, this dissertation replicates age effects on entry into entrepreneurship. The three studies show the dynamic in age effect on entry into entrepreneurship as being age mechanisms moderated by other factors, which are related to the individual's characteristics (e.g. gender and occupation) or contextual factors (e.g. gender-egalitarianism and life expectancy). Moreover, individuals' behaviour in relation to a similar institutional setting is not homogeneous, because the findings from this study show that it varies in relation to the individuals' life courses and age and developmental stage of countries. Thus, individuals are not merely passive receivers of social change and influences, which highlights the importance of human agency versus the determinism of institutions.

This study demonstrates how individuals' characteristics and contextual factors, moderate age mechanisms, as well as the age effect on entry into entrepreneurship, and make it dynamic. Variety in the antecedents of entry into entrepreneurship in relation to individuals' age highlights the importance of specific policies for each age group. As we know the general age effects on entry into entrepreneurship, then giving consideration to the moderating factors that enhance or inhibit entrepreneurial activity within specific age groups is important for boosting entrepreneurial activity.

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The Department of Entrepreneurship and Relationship Management is located at the University of Southern Denmark, campus Kolding, and employs approximately 85 people. This location is central to the growth centres within the Triangle Region and offers a unique opportunity to close cooperation with the companies and public authorities in the region in respect to research and educational projects.

For several years the research of the department has been based on learning networks with companies and trade promotion institutions. In addition to this, the department has a long tradition of problem-based cooperation across traditional business research areas and very often by means of external funding. The research of the department concentrates on two key areas: entrepreneurship and relationship management and originates from traditional research areas such as marketing, applied economics, accounting, operation management and organization.

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