

Women Entrepreneurs in Health Care: An Exploratory Study

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Abstract : Women participate extensively in the healthcare field, professionally (as physicians, nurses, dietitians, etc.) as well as informally (as caregivers at home). This provides them with a better understanding of the health needs of people. Women are also in the forefront of using social media and other mobile health related apps. Further, many health mobile apps are specifically designed for women users. All of these indicate the potential for women to be successful entrepreneurs in healthcare, especially, in the area of mobile health app development. However, extant research in entrepreneurship has paid limited attention to women entrepreneurship in healthcare. The objective of this study is to determine the key factors that shape the intentions and actions of women entrepreneurs with regard to their entrepreneurial pursuits in the healthcare field. Specifically, the study advances several hypotheses that relate key variables such as personal skills and capabilities, experience, support from institutions and family, and perceptions regarding entrepreneurship to individual intentions and actions regarding entrepreneurship (specifically, in the area of mobile apps). The study research model will be validated using survey data collected from potential women entrepreneurs in the healthcare field - students in the area of health informatics and engineering. The questionnaire-based survey relates to woman respondents' intention to become entrepreneurs in healthcare and the key factors (independent variables) that may facilitate or inhibit their entrepreneurial intentions and pursuits. The survey data collection is currently ongoing. We also plan to conduct semi-structured interviews with around 10-15 women entrepreneurs who are currently developing mobile apps to understand the key issues and challenges that they face in this area. This is an exploratory study and as such our goal is to combine the findings from the regression analysis of the survey data and that from the content analysis of the interview data to inform on future research on women entrepreneurship in healthcare. The study findings will hold important policy implications, specifically for the development of new programs and initiatives to promote women entrepreneurship, particularly in healthcare and technology areas.

Keywords : women entrepreneurship, healthcare, mobile apps, health apps

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