

# Entrepreneurship in Higher Education in Tourism, gender issue?

**Guzmán A. Muñoz-Fernández,  
Pablo Rodríguez-Gutiérrez & Luna Santos-Roldán**

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Departamento de Estadística, Econometría, Investigación Operativa,  
Organización de Empresas y Economía Aplicada, Universidad de Córdoba

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**Spain**

*Correspondence:* Guzmán Antonio Muñoz Fernández, Facultad de Derecho y CC. Económicas y Empresariales,  
PI/ Puerta Nueva, s/n (14004) Córdoba (Spain). E-mail: guzman.munoz@uco.es

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## Abstract

**Introduction.** This paper analyses those interpersonal skills which determine the entrepreneurial profile among students in Tourism Higher Education. We aim to verify if there are significant differences by gender diagnosis and to take this into account for future academic curriculums.

**Method.** A survey was conducted with the students of Tourism at the University of Cordoba (Spain); we have studied the interpersonal skills related to entrepreneurship and several sociodemographic and education moderating variables. For data analysis, we have developed logit regression models about entrepreneurial intention by gender.

**Results.** The results show that women have more discipline and responsibility than men, which is fundamental for start-ups; but in opposition to this, women have a lower propensity towards entrepreneurship and it has not been perceived significant competences connected to the risk or initiative.

**Conclusion.** It is deduced from the paper that some educational strategies since childhood could be discouraging this kind of attitude. We outline the need for developing specific education policies for female students at different educational levels, in order to promote the skills linked to entrepreneurship.

**Keywords:** Entrepreneurship, Gender, Skills, Higher Education, Tourism

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# El emprendimiento en la Educación Superior en la Titulación de Turismo, ¿cuestión de género?

## Resumen

**Introducción.** Este trabajo estudia las competencias intrapersonales que determinan el perfil emprendedor del alumnado en la Educación Superior en Turismo para comprobar si existen diferencias significativas según género como diagnóstico y punto de partida de la situación para futuros planes de estudio.

**Método.** Se realizó una encuesta a estudiantes de Educación Superior en Turismo de la Universidad de Córdoba (España) y se analizaron las competencias intrapersonales relacionadas con el emprendimiento y ciertas variables moderadoras sociodemográficas y de formación. Para el análisis de los datos se han realizado modelos de regresión logit sobre intención emprendedora, por género.

**Resultados.** Los resultados muestran que las mujeres tienen mayor disciplina y responsabilidad que los hombres, características básicas para la creación de empresas, sin embargo, presenta una menor propensión hacia el emprendimiento, y ninguna competencia significativa relacionada con el riesgo o la iniciativa.

**Discusión y Conclusión.** Se intuye que las estrategias de educación desde la niñez pueden ser desalentadoras de este tipo de actitudes. Se propone la necesidad de realizar políticas educativas específicas para las alumnas en los distintos niveles educativos, que fomenten estas competencias relacionadas con el emprendimiento.

**Palabras Clave:** Emprendimiento, Género, Competencias, Educación Superior, Turismo

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## Introduction

*Entrepreneurial initiative* is understood as individuals' ability to transform ideas into action. It is a key capacity in young people that helps and spurs them to be more creative and self-confident. As such, it ought to be present throughout their educational processes. The entrepreneurial spirit bolsters a nation's economy by fostering innovation, generating competition, creating jobs and wealth, and increasing purchasing power (Holmgren & From, 2005).

When this entrepreneurial spirit is applied to the Tourism sector, it takes the form of new experiences, providing tourists with increased satisfaction (Blake, Sinclair & Soria, 2006; Cawley & Gillmor, 2008). One should not forget that the Tourism sector is undergoing a profound structural change whose effects will intensify in the future (Danilo, Melo & Rocha, 2012; Pedreño & Ramón, 2009), shaped by innovations and completely new processes that will supplant the preceding ones (Tether, 2003), with increased competitiveness and complexity, making it imperative that higher education in Tourism instils capacities related to entrepreneurship and finding opportunities. University students, however, are still quite averse to choosing self-employment as a professional path, compared to other alternatives (Benavides, Sánchez-García & Luna-Arocas, 2004) as they continue to rely on finding conventional employment, though it is increasingly precarious.

As to the question of whether it is necessary to have special abilities or qualities to be an entrepreneur, some authors believe that those who are able to identify opportunities are able to gather and motivate the people necessary to achieve objectives, and are equally capable of leading teams, which, in turn, lead organizations (Silva, 1998). This transformation of the Tourism sector means that professionals are being trained to work in an industry that no longer exists. Hence, students must be provided with learning that is more versatile, adaptable and dynamic (Espelt, 2009). That is, they should be acquiring skills in decision-making, adaptability, creativity, flexibility, and new technologies, because entrepreneurs are made, not born. Most curricula, however, deliver training that does not go much beyond the desk at a hotel reception area or travel agency.

Through this work, we have sought to identify the intra-personal skills that define the entrepreneurial profile amongst university Tourism students in Spain and to verify whether there are significant differences based on gender, in order to serve as a diagnostic and starting point, and to ascertain what skills they ought to acquire via curricula. In accordance with this aim, the work is divided into five parts, starting with this introduction to the subject, continuing with a review of the existing literature on it, followed by a presentation of the methodology used in the research, and the field results obtained. To conclude, we present our research's conclusions and bibliographical references.

### *Review of existing literature*

The literature has approached the study of entrepreneurship from three perspectives: socio-demographic, psychological, and situational, addressing it from different areas in the social sciences. The *socio-demographic perspective*, in reference to the family's professional or business experience, age, sex, etc., involves factors that have been linked to an inclination towards entrepreneurship. A family business tradition influences one's attitude towards entrepreneurship (Basu & Goswami, 1999; Duchesneau & Gartner, 1990). By working in a family business people acquire ideas and skills to start their own business or continue with their families, especially in the Tourism industry, in which family businesses have traditionally been very important (Getz & Carlsen, 2005). The regional factor and ethnicity's impact on the entrepreneurial spirit, particularly, have also been mentioned among factors affecting entrepreneurship (Tolbert, David & Sine, 2011). In parallel, there are studies citing the influence of international experience in the global entrepreneurial landscape (Sommer, 2013). Empirical studies have also shown the relationship between entrepreneurship and gender (Díaz & Jiménez, 2004; González-Morales, 2001; Mueller, 2004; Veciana & Urbano, 2004), suggesting a greater tendency towards entrepreneurship among men than women. Delmar & Davidson (2000) argue that gender is a determining factor in the decision to be an entrepreneur, with men more focused on starting businesses than women. Based on similar considerations, one's surroundings also shape his perception of the desirability and possibility of creating new companies (Díaz, Hernández & Raposo, 2007).

The *psychological perspective* seeks the defining, intrinsic characteristics that differentiate entrepreneurs from non-entrepreneurs. This perspective is based on creativity (Elkington & Hartigan, 2008), optimism, pessimism and realism (López & García, 2011), self confi-

dence, a propensity to take risks, a tolerance for uncertainty (Begley & Boyd 1987; Thomas & Mueller, 2000) and even personal autonomy and the need for individual support. Some studies argue that the influence of certain personality traits is the greatest factor affecting the decision to become an entrepreneur (Nga & Shamuganathan, 2010), with one of the explanations for these results being that entrepreneurs are able to perceive the context of risk differently than other segments of the population (Caliendo & Kritikos, 2009; Janney & Dess, 2006). Research by Ang & Hong (2000), Gürol & Atsan (2006) and Koh (1996) on students showed that entrepreneurial plans were more common amongst those who were more likely to take risks, with a positive relationship existing between the tendency to take risks and plans to found companies (de la Fuente, Vera & Cardelle-Elawar, 2012; Gurel, Altinay & Daniele, 2010).

The *situational perspective* spurs the individual to consider entrepreneurship when his social or economic social situation changes, or when he sees an opportunity in his work. From this point of view, unemployment is considered a determining factor (Evans & Leighton, 1989). It should be noted that situations of long-term unemployment, or a lack of confidence that one will land a salaried job, force some to become entrepreneurs out of necessity in order to avoid marginalization. In the view of Shapero & Sokol (1982), humans operate based on inertia, which shifts when his situation is interrupted or changes, whether positively or negatively. It is this dynamic that spurs people to make decisions to seek better opportunities. In this regard, society's economic development and the actions of government authorities play an active role in the culture of entrepreneurship, influencing the entrepreneurial process (Alburquerque, 2008; Castro, Benerrechea & Ibarra, 2011; Meek, Pacheco & York, 2010; Tolbert et al., 2011). Based on these contributions, the importance of institutions in fostering women's entrepreneurship has been studied (Bruton, Ahlstrom & Li, 2010; De Bruin, Brush & Welter, 2007).

### *Objectives*

In light of all this, the need to train students for entrepreneurship through the formative process is evident, including the capacity to create, recognize opportunities and assess risks (Detienne & Chandler, 2004). The more higher education foment these skills, the more likely students will be to develop this entrepreneurial spirit at times in their lives when the social or situational factor is appropriate. In this regard, to achieve our main goal of verifying whether intra-personal skills and/or the sociocultural context are related to the intention to become an

entrepreneur, viewed from the perspective of gender; and, if so, to quantify this relationship, the following research questions are formulated, that will be verified in the study, as follows:

- Research Question 1 (RQ1): Is there a relationship between gender and the perceived desirability of becoming an entrepreneur?
- Research Question 2 (RQ2): Is there a relationship between intrapersonal skills and the desirability of becoming an entrepreneur?
- Research Question 3 (RQ3): To what extent does gender determine the personal profile of entrepreneurs?

## Method

### *Participants*

The survey was initially sent to 353 Tourism students at the University of Córdoba, in April and May 2014. Six surveys were discarded due to the omission of important data. Random sampling was used to select respondents. The sample is a true reflection of the demographic reality of Tourism students, in which 66.45% of all students enrolled are women. In this sample, 32.3% of respondents were men and 67.7% were women. Table 1 presents their characteristics by gender, age, academic year, prior professional experience, and participation in associations of a social, cultural or athletic nature. The significance level of the sample was 95%, and its sampling error 3.76% of the total number of Tourism students.

**Table 1. Sample characterization by gender**

Age	Male	Female	Year	Male	Female
< 20	16.96%	28.51%	1°	23.21%	34.47%
20-25	69.64%	67.66%	2°	27.68%	25.11%
> 25	13.39%	3.83%	3°	16.96%	16.17%
			4°	32.14%	24.26%
Professional experience	Male	Female	Participat. in associations	Male	Female
Yes	49.11%	34.04%	Si	44.64%	31.91%
No	50.89%	65.96%	No	55.36%	68.09%

Source: Compiled by authors

### *Instruments*

Due to the nature of the research question, a quantitative approach was used for research in order to gauge the intensity of the aforementioned factors and their impact on the intention to initiate entrepreneurial activity. The research tool used involved fieldwork consisting of a survey on attitudes toward entrepreneurship, adapted to the object of this study, and using Genesca and Veciana's (1984) research as a reference, verified by Aponte (2002) and Diaz, *et al.* (2007). Initially, a pre-test was conducted with 9 students to confirm its validity, identifying some expressions that were found to be somewhat or wholly inadequate.

### *Procedure*

Convenience sampling was used and is ordinarily used in this type of research in which respondents are available only at a certain place and time. At first, once the survey was selected and adapted for the purpose of the study, a document was drawn up on the purpose of the study and was submitted to the Tourism coordinator. After obtaining permission, we contacted those responsible for classes in order to ask them to help us get the surveys out to the students. The researcher was instructed that he could provide clarifications of concepts, but no further clarifications about the formulation of the survey.

### *Statistical Analysis*

As a preliminary step, we employed a bivariate descriptive analysis to determine whether two variables are associated. The tool chosen was the contingency table. Moreover, two different statistics were used to determine the existence or absence of the relationship. In the case of the variables, which were compared to each other, when both dichotomous in the 2 x 2 form, Pearson's Phi coefficient was employed as the statistic (hereinafter  $\phi$ ); secondly, for the case in which the number of rows was different from the number of columns, the Pearson contingency coefficient was selected (hereinafter  $\chi^2$ ).

Logistic regression analysis was used as the main statistical device (Fuentes & Sánchez, 2010; Turró, Urban & Peris-Ortiz, 2014) to determine the intra-personal skills that affect students' entrepreneurial attitudes. Moreover, two factors were also studied that we have called sociocultural, and two educational, as variables moderating entrepreneurial intentions. For greater accuracy, a gender-based model was created to determine whether the sig-



nificant variables that determine entrepreneurship differ. The SPSS statistical package was used for the statistical analysis of the data.

## Results

First, it was verified whether there was a relationship between the respondent's gender variables, on the one hand, and the performance of other activities, such as work or membership in some type of organization. The Pearson's Phi coefficient between the gender variables and work experience had a value of  $\phi(1, N= 347) = .140, p < .05$ . Also, a relationship between gender and participation in some kind of association  $\phi(1, N= 347) = .143, p < .05$  was detected.

### *The perceived desirability of entrepreneurship*

The second question addressed the desirability of creating one's own company. In this regard, higher education Tourism students expressed positive attitudes towards entrepreneurship (73.6%), but this initial tendency was stronger among male students (78%) than among females (69.8%),  $\phi(1, N= 347) = .085, p < .1$ , as in the results of Díaz *et al.* (2007). In addition, those who perform any kind of job, or have some professional experience,  $\phi(1, N= 347) = .194, p < .01$ , harbour a greater desire to become entrepreneurs (84.1%) than students without previous experience (66.7%). In addition, being in the process of finishing one's studies also led to an increase in the perceived desirability of entrepreneurship,  $\chi^2(1, N= 347) = .247, p < .01$ , with 79.2% and 87.2%, respectively, for the third and fourth academic years, compared to 57.9% of students enrolled in their first year and 71.7% in their second. Despite this high percentage expressing a desire for self-employment, a significant number viewed it as extremely difficult (76.9%), without the detection of significant differences based on gender, age, professional experience, the existence of entrepreneurs in the family, academic year, or participation in some type of association. Age was also a factor affecting the perceived desirability of becoming an entrepreneur,  $\chi^2(1, N= 347) = .112, p < .1$ . In this case, there exists a difference of 5 percentage points in favour of older students. When delving deeper into respondents' intentions to create companies or not, what the literature has come to call "potential entrepreneurs" (Huefner, Hunt, & Robinson, 1996; López, García Cano, Gea & de la Fuente, 2010), the students' response rate fell to 33.3%.

*Perception of intra-personal skills*

The survey requested a self-assessment in relation to a set of skills. For this purpose, a 4-point Likert scale was used, with value 1 corresponding to a “lack of skill” and 4 to the “great presence of the skill” in order to determine whether there are gender-based differences. The non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test was used as the statistical verification tool.

The data obtained indicate that there were significant differences in the perceptions of women and men in 3 of the 20 skills analysed (Table 2). Male students had higher scores in skills "2" and "20", related to aspects having to do with initiative, self-confidence, optimism and a willingness to undertake more complex activities, as skills associated with the entrepreneurial profile (Boydston Hopper & Wright, 2000; Davidson, 1989; McClelland, 1961). In contrast, female students had higher scores when it came to skill "3," related to responsibility and discipline. Thus, they see themselves as setting higher standards at work, dedicating the time to get better results, and being more motivated to study (Echavarri, Godoy & Olaz, 2007; Edel, 2003; Hackett & Betz, 1989; Olaz, 2003).

**Table 2. Mann-Whitney U test intra-personal skills**

Intra-personal skills	Men Mean	Women Mean	Mann-Whitney Z Value (sig.)
1. Adaptability	3.34	3.37	-.117 (.907)
2. Self-confidence	3.04	2.81	-1.744 (.081)***
3. Self-Discipline	3.09	3.32	-1.785 (.074)***
4. Autonomy at work	3.38	3.26	-.601 (.548)
5. Anticipate and foresee	3.28	3.08	-1.247 (.212)
6. Easy communication	3.22	3.34	-.466 (.641)
7. Creativity to solve problems	2.91	2.93	-.091 (.928)
8. Curious to know	3.43	3.43	-.021 (.983)
9. Dedication at work	3.02	3.17	-1.189 (.235)
10. Optimism at facing difficulties	2.98	2.73	-1.64 (.101)
11. Emotional stability	3.28	3.10	-1.154 (.248)
12. Persevering	3.17	3.13	-.046 (.963)
13. Enthusiastic to start projects	3.15	3.19	-.376 (.707)
14. Tolerance to failures	2.72	2.72	-.009 (.993)
15. Initiative in complex situations	2.89	2.84	-.404 (.686)
16. Imagination in the evolution of projects	3.28	3.25	-.277 (.782)
17. Attraction to independence	3.50	3.38	-.96 (.337)
18. Encouragement to new challenges	3.23	3.12	-.728 (.467)
19. Responsibility to decisions	3.45	3.50	-.759 (.448)
20. Willingness to take risks	3.07	2.80	-2.089 (.037)**

Note: \*  $p < .1$  \*\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .01$

*Determinants of the intention to become an entrepreneur*

The following binary logit models have been put forth:

- Model 1: Entrepreneurial intent dependent on intra-personal skills.
- Model 2: Entrepreneurial intent dependent on intra-personal skills and sociocultural environment (professional experience and a business tradition in the family).
- Model 3: Entrepreneurial intent dependent on intra-personal skills, socio-cultural environment and training (participation in some kind of association and course).

The dependent variable addresses the question of the intention to seek self-employment or not. The variable is codified taking only two values: on one hand, the value 0 (no intent or vague intent) and, on the other, the value 1 (if the intention exists). The independent variables were coded as dichotomous variables with the value 0, the reduced presence of skill and 1, the great presence of the skill. The same applies to the moderating variables.

The models being:

$$Y_i \text{ (male/female)} = \beta + 1\text{competen\_}1_i + \dots + 20\text{competen\_}20_i + 21\text{profess\_}exper.i + 22\text{entrepren\_}famil_i + 23\text{course} + 24\text{partic\_}associac_i + e_i$$

A regression analysis was performed using the stepwise estimation methodology (likelihood ratio) to address the possible existence of multicollinearity. The final models presented only include variables that were significant.

**Table 3. Binary logit model about entrepreneurial intention. Males**

Competences	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	$\beta$	Coefic.	Signific.	$\beta$	Coefic.	Signific.	$\beta$	Coefic.	Signific.
1. Adaptability	-1.199	5.85	.016**	-1.039	4.917	.027**	-14.436	5.010	.025**
2. Self-confidence									
3. Self-Discipline	1.223	5.904	.015**	1.405	6.767	.009*	5.575	5.648	.017**
4. Autonomy at work							6.221	5.565	.018**
5. Anticipate and foresee							-13.999	5.352	.021**
6. Easy communication							12.212	5.937	.015**
7. Creativity to solve problems									
8. Curious to know							15.257	5.734	.017**
9. Dedication at work									
10. Optimism at facing difficulties							-11.238	5.847	.016**
11. Emotional stability							-6.762	4.142	.042**
12. Persevering							7.686	5.496	.019**

13. Enthusiastic to start projects									
14. Tolerance to failures	-0.668	2.964	.085						
15. Initiative in complex situations									
16. Imagination in the evolution of projects	-1.232	5.557	.018**	-1.25	5.863	.015**			
17. Attraction to independence									
18. Encouragement to new challenges	1.878	8.463	.004*	1.192	3.695	.055	12.107	6.262	.012**
19. Responsibility to decisions	-3.297	9.643	.002*	-3.112	9.227	.002**	-18.338	6.034	.014**
20. Willingness to take risks							16.513	6.664	.010**
21. Professional experience							7.087	5.087	.024**
22. Entrepreneurs in the family									
23. Course									
24. Participation in associations							-16.963	6.315	.012**
Constant	4.086	4.716	.03**	2.704	3.234	.072	-17.290	4.776	.029**
-2 Log Verosim.		74.221			71.291			41.831	
R <sup>2</sup> Cox and Snell		.265			.257			.501	
R <sup>2</sup> Nagelkerke		.367			.358			.699	

Note: \*  $p < .1$  \*\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .01$

In Model 1, for the males (Table 3), we observe the presence of significant intra-personal skills, such as self-discipline at work and stimulation by new challenges, attributes related to perseverance and creation, although this model features a low explanatory level. The introduction of moderating variables of professional experience and participation in associations from Model 3 made it possible to increase the number of attributes that determine entrepreneurship and significantly improve the predictive model's explanatory capacity of men's entrepreneurial attitudes, increasing the corrected R<sup>2</sup> to approximately 0.7.

**Table 4. Binary logit model about entrepreneurial intention. Females**

Competences	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	$\beta$	Coefic.	Signific.	$\beta$	Coefic.	Signific.	$\beta$	Coefic.	Signific.
1. Adaptability									
2. Self-confidence									
3. Self-Discipline				-0.148	.169	.681			
4. Autonomy at work	-0.487	3.636	.057	-0.749	4.601	.032**	-0.804	3.496	.062
5. Anticipate and foresee									
6. Easy communication									
7. Creativity to solve problems									
8. Curious to know									

9. Dedication at work	-.626	6.763	.009*	-.922	6.847	.009*	-1.030	8.278	.004*
10. Optimism at facing difficulties									
11. Emotional stability	.715	9.088	.003*	.966	8.238	.004*	.795	5.072	.024**
12. Persevering				-.998	5.336	.021**	-.891	4.861	.027**
13. Enthusiastic to start projects									
14. Tolerance to failures									
15. Initiative in complex situations									
16. Imagination in the evolution of projects									
17. Attraction to independence									
18. Encouragement to new challenges									
19. Responsibility to decisions									
20. Willingness to take risks									
21. Professional experience				2.316	15.189	.000*	2.720	13.747	.000*
22. Entrepreneurs in the family				-1.014	4.262	.039**	-0.951	3.796	.050**
23. Course									
24. Participation in associations									
Constant	-0.109	0.026	0.872	-0.182	.024	.877	-1.968	1.431	.232
-2 Log Verosim.		190.475			155.390			150.094	
R <sup>2</sup> Cox and Snell		0.123			0.265			0.267	
R <sup>2</sup> Nagelkerke		0.170			0.367			0.371	

Note: \*  $p < .1$  \*\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .01$ .

In the case of girls (Table 4), the explanatory models feature limited global explanatory capacity ( $R^2$  of 0.170 for Model 1, increasing up to 0.371 for Model 3), with few explanatory intrapersonal skills. Professional experience ( $p < .01$ ) features a positive associated coefficient, just as in the model for males, representing a success factor for the exploration of new business opportunities (Fayolle & Gailly, 2004; Lazear, 2004). The same cannot be said for the presence of businesspeople in the family. On the contrary, it seems that the presence of entrepreneurs in the family actually has a negative effect on entrepreneurial intentions. This disaffection, differing from the findings previously published by Basu & Goswami (1999), and Duchesneau & Gartner (1990), may be due to a widespread perception of the non-viability of SMEs in the wake of the adverse effects of the recent economic crisis.

## Discussion and Conclusions

The main objective of this study was to ascertain the intra-personal skills that determine the entrepreneurial profile of higher education students studying Tourism and to determine whether there are significant differences based on gender, giving rise to the three research questions outlined in this paper. With reference to the research's first question (RQ1), as a previous observation, the results indicate that male students demonstrate a higher predisposition to combine their academic activity with some type of professional activity, and exhibit a greater degree of participation in other activities, whether cultural, athletic or social, irrespective of the aforementioned labour-related activity, than their female classmates. Focusing on the question of the perceived desirability of creating one's own business, there is a marked *initial propensity* among students in general, though it is greater among male students than females. Also, the fact that the male students surveyed who reported having previous professional experience demonstrated a greater desire to become entrepreneurs leads us to suspect that the females' reduced attraction to entrepreneurship may be influenced by their reduced professional experience, as reported in their answers. In addition, "*potential entrepreneurs*" had a reduced response rate: 33.3%. Based on these first indications, we can say that self-employment is a viable alternative for university Tourism students, although there is a certain contradiction between the manifest desire by most to start companies, and ultimate follow-through to make those intentions a reality.

Referring to the second research question (RQ2), there were no significant differences detected based on *gender* in the 20 intra-personal skills analysed related to entrepreneurship. Although the male students reported higher levels of self-confidence and a greater willingness to take risks, the females expressed a greater capacity for self-discipline. However, the results of Model 1, in which entrepreneurial intention was analysed dependent only on intra-personal skills, were not very significant in either gender.

Concerning the third research question (RQ3), Model 3's results allow us to perceive the importance of being active for the students, both socially and professionally, whether through cultural associations, athletics, etc., work, internships, as a stimulator of those skills needed for self-employment and the discovery of business opportunities. However, it is interesting to note that in the case of the female students, though professional experience was still important, there was no significant skill variable related to risk or initiative, but there were

with skills related to self-sacrifice and selflessness – though these had a negative impact on entrepreneurial intention, and a model that was not very explanatory. Of all the significant skills that explain entrepreneurial intention, there was only one that was identical, bridging both sexes: emotional stability, referring to personal maturity and balance.

The incorporation of studies on entrepreneurship focusing on gender should serve as a tool to further the devising of education policies that promote not only women's access to salaried jobs, but also their successful self-employment (Bruton *et al.*, 2010; De Bruin *et al.*, 2007). The large number of women studying Tourism at the higher education level belies a reduced propensity to ultimately choose entrepreneurship, as demonstrated in this study. There are studies indicating that there is a significant gender gap in favour of men concerning entrepreneurship (Klyver, Suna & Rostgaard, 2013; Kreide, 2003). Educational strategies from childhood, however, can cultivate or discourage given emotions, and have been linked to aspects of emotional competence (Gottman, Katz & Hooven, 1997). The greater protection girls receive in the family setting fosters more dependence and obedience, and less self-confidence (Zahn-Waxler, 2000), which stifles the impulse to take on new challenges and the willingness to take risks, which are vital to entrepreneurship. It is necessary to implement *specific educational policies for women* that bolster, from primary through higher education, these and other skills related to entrepreneurship. It is also fundamental that the curricula for students, both male and female, include extensive periods for internships at companies, because this is a determining variable, for both genders, of the ultimate engagement in entrepreneurship, as demonstrated in this research.

The *main limitation* of this work is related to the specificity of its sample, as it does focus on the university Tourism students at the University of Córdoba (Spain), which may lead to some bias regarding the skills of the respondents, and present problems in terms of generalisations about attitudes towards entrepreneurship. Despite this limitation, the results and conclusions of this study make original contributions to the literature, providing a better understanding of the "gender gap" in the sphere of entrepreneurship, in which women are underrepresented.

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