

# **Piccola Impresa/Small Business**

## **Call for papers – “Women in Small and Medium Sized Family Firms: Theory and Practice”**



### **Guest editors**

Mariasole Bannò, PhD, University of Brescia, Italy

Giorgia M. D’Allura, PhD, University of Catania, Italy

Alexandra Dawson, PhD, Concordia University, Canada

Mariateresa Torchia, PhD, International University of Monaco, Principality of Monaco

Francesca Maria Cesaroni, University of Urbino, Italy

Given the importance of small and medium sized enterprises, and considering that many of them are family owned, this special issue will focus on small and medium sized family firms and on the role of women and gender diversity at the board, management and ownership level. Studies of women as managers and/or owners in SMEs are not new to the management literature and are part of a more general stream of research investigating the relationship between diversity and firm's performance. Women are present in every firm and their presence in both entrepreneurial and managerial roles is also relevant in the case of family business which are, by definition, "governed and/or managed with the intention to shape and pursue the vision of the business held by a dominant coalition controlled by members of the same family or a small number of families" (Chua, Chrisman & Sharma 1999).

From the literature, it is not clear whether the family environment supports or obstacles women presence in key roles (Jimenez, 2009; Wang, 2010). On the one hand, family businesses seem to represent the most suitable place to offer opportunities to women because, as family members, they are part of the pool of individuals that business owners typically count on. On the other hand, the context of family business can be an obstacle, as traditional gender roles prevailing in both family and business may be perceived as being inconsistent with corporate hierarchies (Heinonen & Hytti, 2011; Nelson & Constantinidis, 2017). Consequently, the spaces available for women are often marginal, informal or *invisible* (Gillis-Donovan & Moynihan-Bradt, 1990; Hollander & Bukovitz, 1990; Salganicoff, 1990; Dumas, 1992; Cole, 1997). Although men often hold more key positions than women, recent literature suggests that family firms present natural conditions to have more women on the board in strategic management roles (Chadwick & Dawson, 2018; Songini & Gnan, 2009), often thanks to presence of daughters in the new generation or due to marriages involving third parties. Furthermore, family connections with the controlling shareholders are conducive to joining the board, especially in small firms with concentrated ownership (Bianco et al., 2015) and due to the fact that women directors are part of the owning family (Bettinelli et al., 2019). Nevertheless many women still need to overcome serious obstacles to achieve leadership positions in family businesses (Vera & Dean, 2005) and alignment between women's expectations and roles played in family firms is not always possible (Cesaroni & Sentuti, 2018).

While a vast stream of research has analyzed women as entrepreneurs (Hughes et al., 2012; Jennings & Brush, 2013), the debate about women role in small and medium family firms – as being inclusive or hostile environments – as well as the effects of their presence has still to be solved and current research on women in family business doesn't focus on firm dimension. In their recent review Campopiano et al. (2017) underline that studies about the role of women within

family businesses, which starts in the 80s, are still limited. Furthermore Sentuti et al. (2019) maintain that a dichotomous perspective (i.e. visible vs invisible, excluded vs included) is no longer effective to investigate women's role in family businesses, as their participation in ownership, governance and management positions can take place in very different ways. Thus there is room for further investigation and many family business scholars call for the adoption of new theoretical perspectives and methodological tools, in order to gain a deeper understanding of women's experiences in small family firms.

This Special Issue on “Women in Small and Medium Family Firms: Theory and Practice” aims to fill this gap. We are seeking conceptual (including meta-analyses, critical literature reviews, or “state-of-the-art” articles) and/or empirical (qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods) contributions. Authors are also encouraged to propose different and novel approaches for examining small and medium sized firms combined with family business concepts and women role.

Contributions may address, but not limited to, the following questions/topics:

- What is the contribution of women directors to board performance in family SMEs?
- What is the role of women in family SMEs around the world?
- How can women in family SMEs affect the firm's economic development?
- What is the contribution of women in managerial positions in family SMEs and firm (financial and nonfinancial) performance?
- What is the role of tradition in the inclusion of women in family SMEs?
- How does culture shape or influence the presence and contribution of women in family SMEs?
- What is the role of relational capital and network for women in managerial position in family SMEs?
- What kind of inclusive practices are likely to be (uniquely) found in family SMEs, and why?
- What is the role of women in the second generation and beyond in family SMEs at board and management levels and does it differ from their mothers'?
- What are the mechanisms through which women are able to contribute to family SME strategy and/or governance?
- Are family SMEs more or less conducive to gender diversity on the board and/or top management than larger family firms and why?
- Women and Industry 4.0: what opportunities are there to combine family and work life?

This is an open call for papers. This means we welcome conceptual and empirical— qualitative and quantitative—research from scholars in all areas of research and in the international research community who have a particular interest in this field of research.

### **Main references**

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### **Timeline and submission information**

#### **Women in Small and Medium Sized Family Firms: Theory and Practice**

##### *Deadlines*

#### **Women in Small and Medium Sized Family Firms: Theory and Practice**

- Submission of full papers: June, 1 2021
- Notification of acceptance/rejection/revision: September, 15 2021
- Deadline to submit revised version: December 15, 2021
- Notification of final acceptance/rejection: January 15, 2022

All articles will be subject to the standard double-blind review process. The Special Issue is scheduled to be published in **mid-2022**.

Full papers should be submitted through the online platform <http://rivistapiccolaimpresa.uniurb.it/> . The platform can be browsed also in English by using the button “selection language” on the top right side of the home page. Authors will be first requested to fill in the section “Registrazione/registration”; then, they will need to click on “Nuova Proposta/New proposal” in the section “Cruscotto/Dashboard” to upload the files related to their submission. All the papers need to strictly adhere to the specific guidelines of the journal that can be found at this link: <http://rivistapiccolaimpresa.uniurb.it/index.php/piccola/about/submissions#authorGuidelines>. The guidelines can be also browsed in English by using the button “selection language” on the top right side of the webpage.

### **About the journal**

Piccola Impresa/ Small Business Journal aims to contribute to the study and diffusion of knowledge on small-sized entrepreneurial firms. It is an academic journal with international vocation, dedicated specifically to the investigation and theoretical reflection on the administration and management of small businesses, their role in the economy, as well as the policies and regulations they face.