

## Section 1. Gender Sciences

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### WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP AS A FACTOR OF GENDER EQUALITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**Abstract.** Women entrepreneurship has developed fast in recent years and about one-third of entrepreneurs in the world are now women. However, the rates of women entrepreneurs are lower than male entrepreneurs and the situation of male dominated market has not changed at all. As long as the problem of gender bias remains unchanged, women's entrepreneurship will not really develop in the mainstream.

With the usage of data to analyze the facts about women entrepreneurship can we find that the developing countries have lower entrepreneurship and female entrepreneurship rates than developed countries, partly because of the rural areas take greater proportion in developing countries. The rural areas are far from new network information era and cannot be attached to anti-conventional notions about women stay in family.

However, women entrepreneurs cannot only enhance the legitimate position of women in society, but also can make significant contribution to the world. Therefore, as the representatives of our generation, it is responsible for us to spread the reasonable and appropriate ideas about female entrepreneurship and encourage more people to accept it. Doing this can make the future of female entrepreneurship promising and this can contribute the equality of gender.

**Keywords:** women entrepreneurs, conventional notions, gender stereotype, bias, internet network.

#### Introduction

Female entrepreneurs represent the fastest growing category of entrepreneurship worldwide and have received, especially in recent years, the attention of many academics. According to the emerging literature, women can make a significant contribution to entrepreneurial activity and economic development in terms of creating new jobs and increasing the gross domestic product (GDP) with positive impacts on reducing poverty and social exclusion (Cardella et al. [1]).

Therefore, in my paper, I am going to write about the current situations that women entrepreneurship

faced and what methods can be used to clear the way for women entrepreneurs.

#### Definition

While J. Schumpeter defined it as "Women entrepreneurs are those women who innovate, initiate or adopt a business activity" and similarly Frederick Harbison as "Any women or group of women which innovates, initiates or adopts an economic activity may be called women entrepreneurship", the Government of India gave a more specific definition that goes as "an enterprise owned and controlled by a women having a minimum financial interest of 51% of the capital and giving at least 51% of the

employment generated in the enterprise to women” (Bbamantra et al. [2]). To summarize, women entrepreneurship refers to women who initiate an enterprise, organize it, combine factors of production, and undertake risks and uncertainty.

Due to economic progress, better access to advanced education, and the spread of knowledge of democracy and recognition by society, the scale of women entrepreneurship has enlarged greatly. There has more than one-third of the entrepreneurial ventures be run by woman entrepreneurs now in the world and among them, Oprah Winfrey, an American entrepreneur, television host and media executive receiving the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2013 for her outstanding work in the field of entertainment and social impact (Aradhya [3]), is one of the outstanding representatives of women entrepreneurs. But underneath this seemingly normal functioning world of entrepreneurship is an undercurrent. Women entrepreneurs are sprouting from the cracks and growing from the discrimination.

#### **Current situation**

We know that about one-third of entrepreneurs are women, which seems quite normal and optimistic, but the fact is that men are still the dominant component of global entrepreneurial environment. As in many parts of the world now, gender bias to a great degree negatively affected women entrepreneurship. Although the development of society and the advancement of ideas around the world have allowed 253 million women entrepreneurs to actually start their own businesses, they have more or less experienced some of these problems, as I will elaborate in the next paragraph (Gupta [4]). Also, the existence of some conventional sayings “Entrepreneurship is too risky and not a good way to live and work” “Don’t start a new business if you wish a steady life” also affected the global entrepreneurship environment in a bad way.

Firstly, social expectations and conventional doctrines believe that women shouldn’t build their own businesses. The Bible does have instructions

regarding the role of women. In Titus 2:3–4, Paul gives these instructions as to how a young married woman is to be trained by older women: “...train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands so that no one will malign the Word of God.” In this passage, the Bible is clear that when children are in the picture, that is where the young woman’s responsibility lies. The older women are to teach the younger women to live lives that glorify God. Keeping these responsibilities in mind, an older woman’s time can be spent at the Lord’s leading and her discretion (Got Questions.org [5]) Corresponding in China, in Confucianism, it is said that “only by cultivating one’s body and family can one rule the country and level the world”, and for men, the family refers to the macro management, while it is the wives in the family who take up the specific task of the family, and only when the family develops smoothly and truly, can men contribute to the development of the country without fear. Although the history is only in the past, but “women are born to be bound to the family” seems to have become a stereotype in the minds of many people, making women who want to work feel a lack of moral virtue, not to mention women entrepreneurs.

The Bible nowhere forbids a woman from working outside the home. However, the Bible does teach what a woman’s priorities should be. If having a job causes a woman to neglect her children and husband, then it is wrong. If a Christian woman can participate in the workforce and still provide a loving, caring environment for her children and husband, then it is perfectly acceptable for her to work. With these guidelines in mind, there is freedom in Christ (Got Questions.org [5]). If this is true, then why in reality, so many people still believe that women are not suitable for working so hard even if it is their wish? Maybe there had been someone who wanted to preserve the patriarchy... there is not a single event to date back to. I want only to focus on how these ste-

reotypes affect nowadays instead of how these opinions started. (Also, it touches deeper into human nature, morals, and traditional Chinese Confucianism which is beyond the scope of this discussion. I want to focus on the ways to change the situation instead of finding the origins).

History unequivocally affects our current world. It causes problems, especially in the issue of women's entrepreneurship. For example, women lack education. In traditional Chinese storybooks, families sent their male children to the capital to go to school and females must stay at home till marriage. Girls were not allowed to go to school. Although we hardly see this in big cities, a principle named "value the male child only" still appears in many parts of the world. I have heard many stories about how grandparents "prefer sons to daughters" from my female classmates, which created terrible childhood memory for them. Families with this idea may forbid their girls to receive high education when resources are limited. This led to the fact that in some parts of the societies there still are uneducated women. Therefore, when they want to start a business or find a career, they lack the knowledge to execute their ideas. In short, the fact that females may be ignored at a young age and missed the chance of being educated is one of the factors why women entrepreneurship lacks universality.

Nowadays, in movies or TV series, the most common scenario is not women who lack education or bright minds, even if they are smart and talented, distrust from others attacks them constantly. The TV series, *Dine in Love*, tells the story of a female character Su. She is being promoted to become the vice CEO because her boss appreciated her calmness and her way of handling hard tasks. The next scene is the whispering office – her colleagues whispering to each other about how Su is romantically involved with the boss which made her "successful". Only Su's best friend stood up for her and pointed out that this is discrimination. This TV series is not about women entrepreneurship but this kind of bullying in the working place is quite common. this made me realize

that women are often being looked down upon in the working place, and the more successful they are, the more discrimination they face.

### **Data Analysis**

The data used in this study is from the Women Entrepreneurship Index and Global Entrepreneurship Index report in 2015. The report included only the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) member countries. The OECD focuses on the collaboration between its members on key global issues at national, regional, and local levels[6]. The organization has 38 member countries now around the globe, from North and South America to Europe and Asia-Pacific.

The data is in tabular form with 51 rows and 9 columns including Country, Level of Development, European Union Membership, Currency, Women Entrepreneurship Index, Entrepreneurship Index, Inflation Rate, Female Labor Force Participation Rate. There are four object-type columns (Country, Level of Development, EU membership, Currency), the rest are numeric. No duplicate or missing values in the data.

The top 5 countries with the highest Women Entrepreneurship Index are Iceland, France, Netherlands, Denmark, and Australia, while the bottom 5 countries are India, Ghana, Algeria, Egypt, and Bolivia.

The top 5 countries with the highest Entrepreneurship Index are Taiwan, Iceland, Denmark, Sweden, and Australia, while the bottom 5 countries are Ghana, India, Brazil, Jamaica, and Bolivia.

The top 5 countries with the highest Female Labor Force Participation Rate are Denmark, Macedonia, Sweden, Switzerland, and Iceland, while the bottom 5 countries are Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Tunisia, Turkey, and Jamaica.

The 5 countries with the highest Inflation Rate are Brazil, Egypt, Russia, Ghana, and Argentina. The 5 countries with the lowest (negative) Inflation Rate are El Salvador, Greece, Switzerland, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Lithuania.

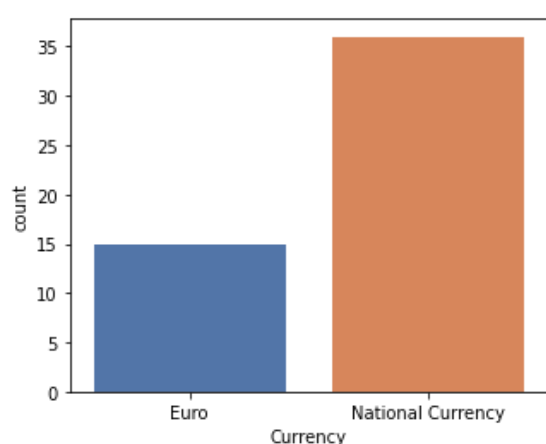


Figure 1. Count plot of Currence

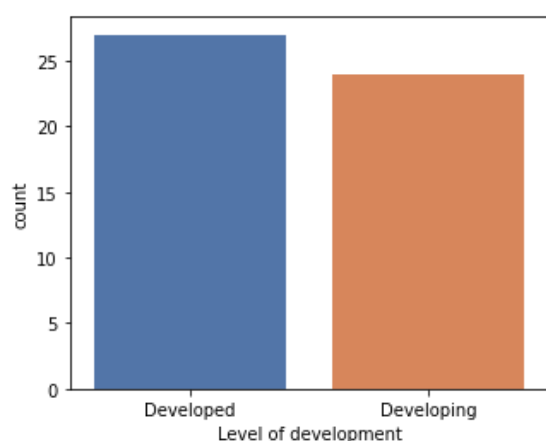


Figure 2. Count plot of Level of development

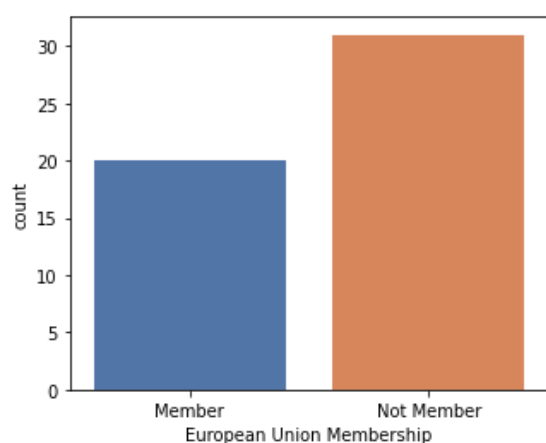


Figure 3. Count plot of European Union Membership

Illustrated in the count plots (figures 1–3), out of the 51 entries, 20 countries are EU members. 36 regions use their national currency, and 15 countries use

Euro; 27 regions are classified as developed and the rest are developing. About one-third of EU members still use national currency and all developing countries are non-EU members, as shown in figures 4–5.

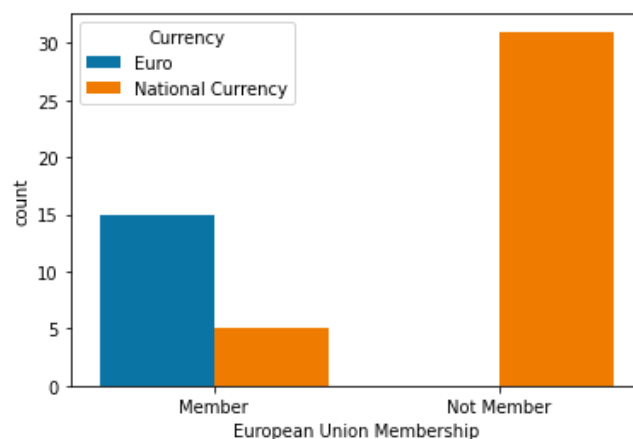


Figure 4. Count plot of European Union Membership color-coded with Currency

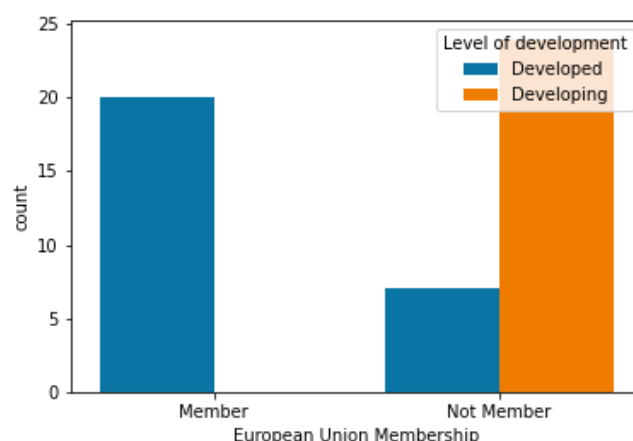


Figure 5. Count plot of European Union Membership color-coded with Level of development

Histograms show data distribution by dividing the x-axis into bins and showing the count of data within each bin. The count or the height of bars is the value on the y-axis. Figures 6–8 show the histograms of numeric variables in the data color-coded by Currency, EU Membership, and Level of Development, respectively. Countries using the euro have relatively more active entrepreneurship and female labor force with some exceptions and lower inflation rates. EU members share the same trend. Developed countries have a definite lead in entrepreneurship and female labor participation rate.

Correlation heatmap visualizes the correlation matrix of the numeric variables by using colors to denote numbers. Women Entrepreneurship Index and Entrepreneurship Index are highly correlated with a correlation coefficient of 0.91. Female Labor

Force Participation Rate and Women Entrepreneurship Index are slightly correlated. The Inflation Rate is slightly negatively correlated with the Women Entrepreneurship Index and the Entrepreneurship Index with correlation coefficients of  $-0.46$  and  $-0.4$ .

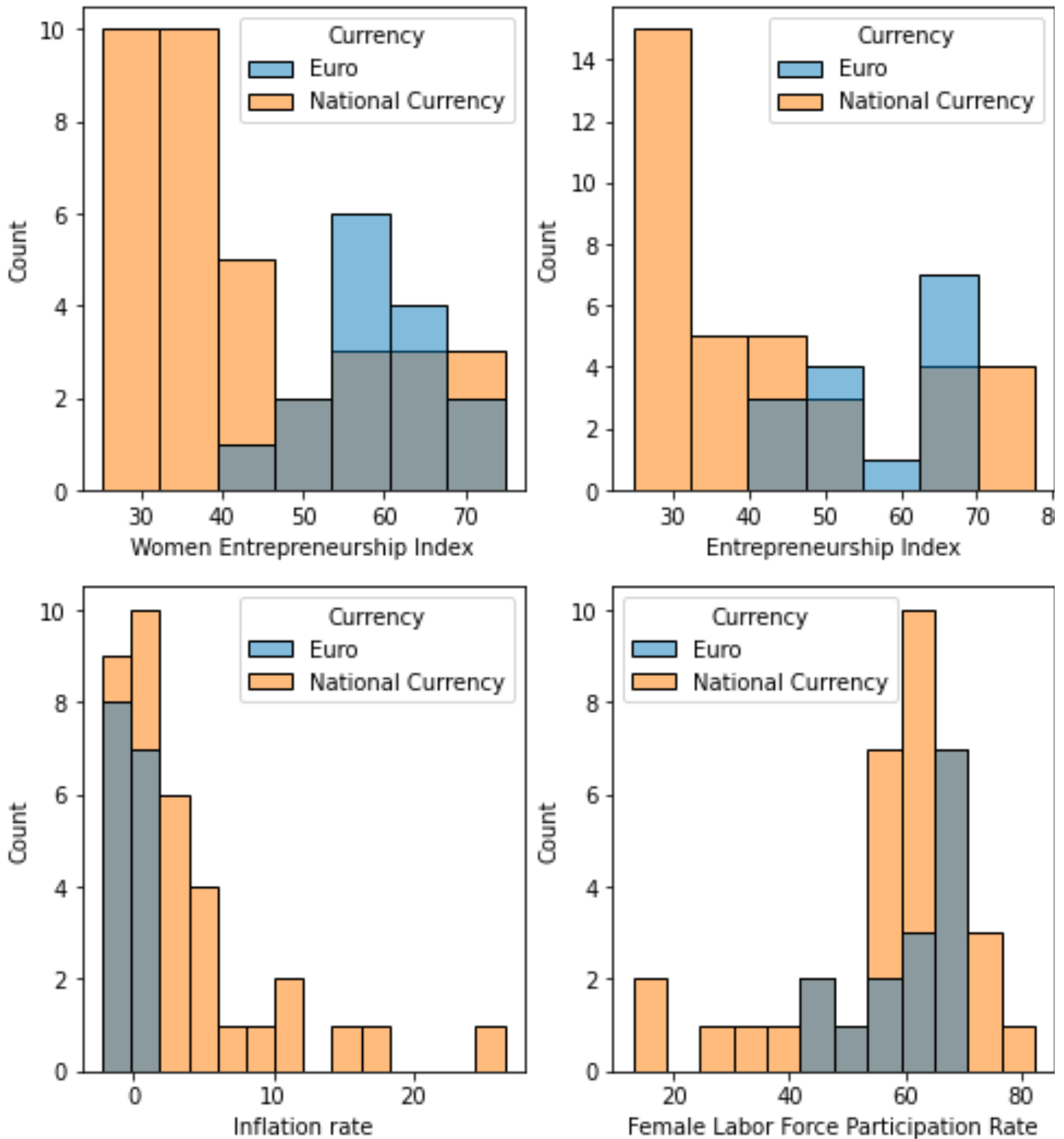


Figure 6. Histogram of variables color-coded by Currency

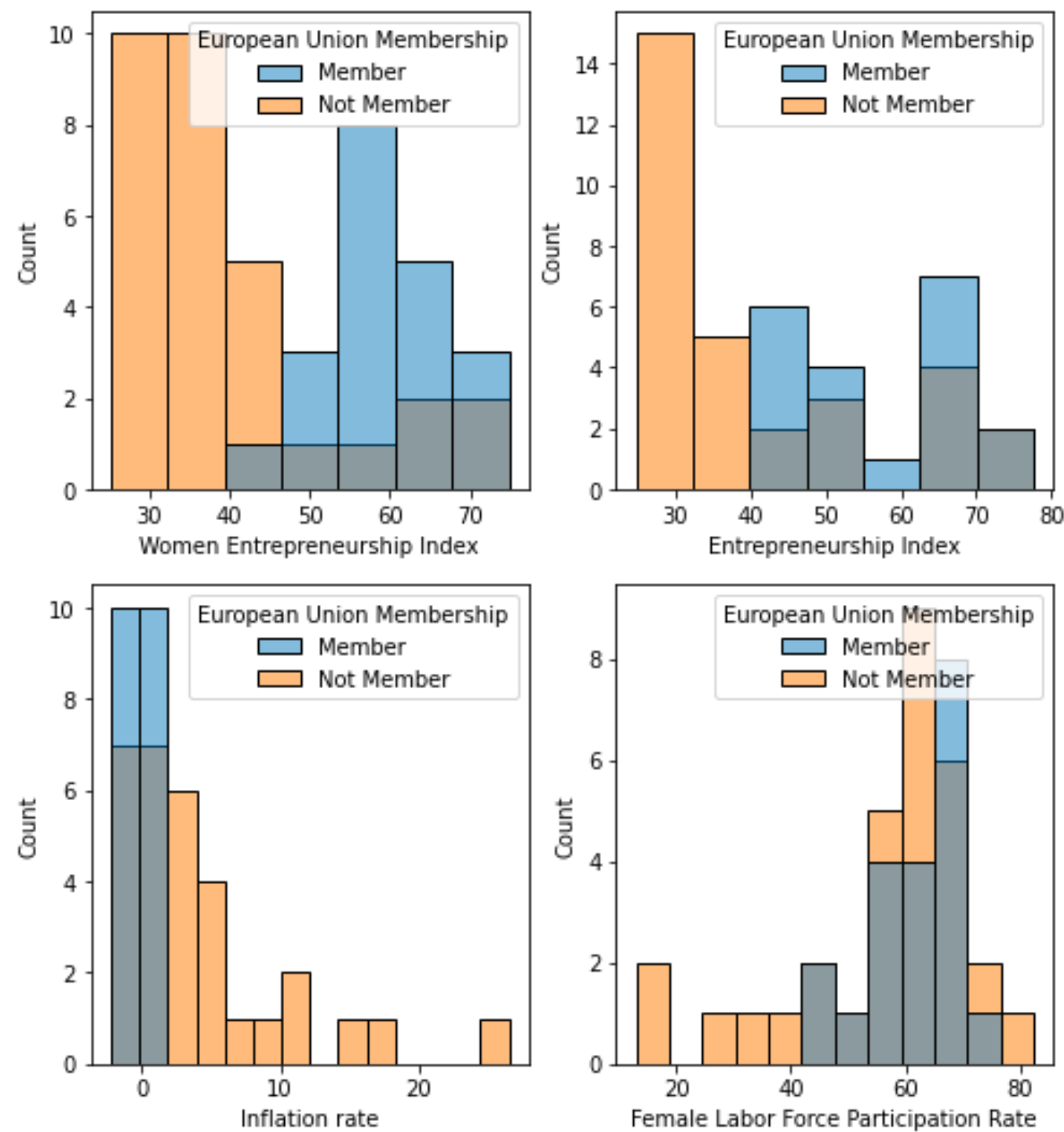


Figure 7. Histogram of variables color-coded by European Membership

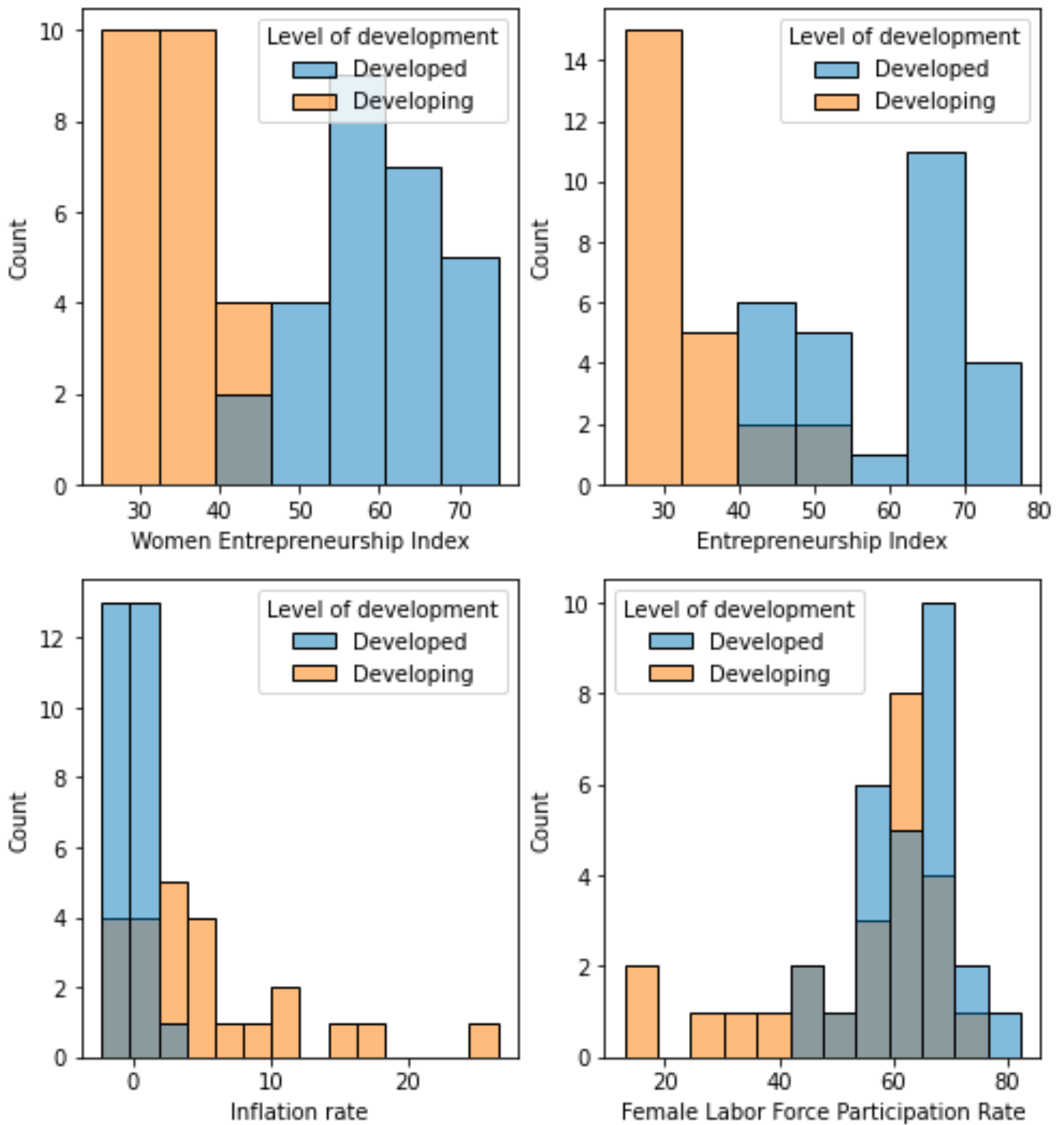


Figure 8. Histogram of variables color-coded by Level of development

### Relationship between variables

We can see that entrepreneurship has a close relationship with women entrepreneurship, with a

correlation coefficient of 0.91, which means that the problem is not only with women entrepreneurs but also with all entrepreneurs.

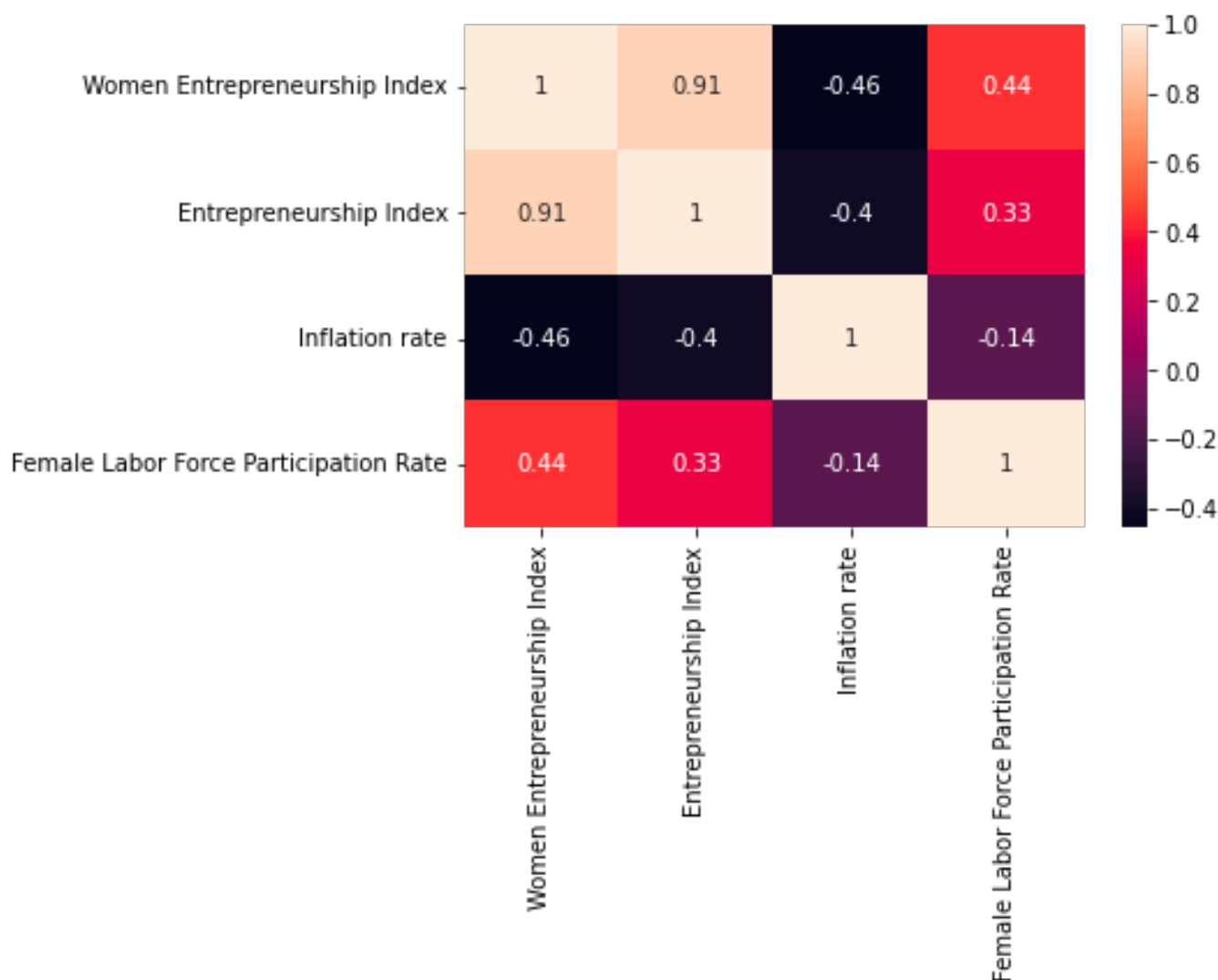


Figure 9. Correlation matrix heatmap

In Asian culture, families usually are not supportive towards their children who want to be entrepreneurs, instead, civil servants or corporate employees are what they want their children to be. This has a big impact on undergraduates who are looking for a job. The way people see entrepreneurs gradually forms a hostile environment for them.

### The invaluable benefits of women entrepreneurship

With the current problems of women entrepreneurship and data analysis, I intend to tell the reader

that the benefits of female entrepreneurship for individuals and society are immeasurable and that if there were more female entrepreneurs in society how much more productive it would be.

Firstly, women entrepreneurs design and create products for female customers, which can more precisely meet the specific needs for certain products and fill the gap created by male producers in the past. For instance, swimsuits, when designed by females, can better fit women's bodies. At the same time, only female investors can better under-



stand the concept and the originality of the ideas brought by female founders, but the truth is: that in a male-dominated investment market, it is difficult to find female investors who also understand the needs of women.

Secondly, some industries come back into the light because of women entrepreneurs, for example, some extremely intricate handicrafts. In China, some of the beautiful artisan handicrafts from the ethnic minorities in rural areas have recently re-emerged outside their local markets. The creators rely on new marketing tools such as webcasting, to sell their goods. As women entrepreneurs, they have enriched their own lives, and at the same time, they have helped preserve the cultural heritage from drowning in the dust of the countryside. Also, it is a way of helping remote rural areas achieve poverty eradication.

#### **Inevitable difficulties and the reality of women entrepreneurship**

However, this is not easy to achieve due to the realities I mentioned earlier that stand in the way, including gender stereotypes and entrepreneurial bias.

Feminism kicked off as early as the late eighteenth century, and it is only today, thanks to the rapid spread of online information, that feminism is widely recognized and disseminated. The development of feminism can be said to have paved an important path for the development of female entrepreneurs, but this exists only in urban and town areas covered by online information, and feminism is to a certain extent completely unknown to rural areas that lack online access. Analysis of the data shows that the number of female entrepreneurs in developing countries is significantly lower than in developed countries, partly due to their different rural representation. The traditional belief that women should be tied to their families, as mentioned above, has not changed for generations of people living in rural areas, where information is far behind the new age and they are stuck in the past, not yet connected to the Internet.

#### **Trial and error, small but significant achievement**

Since rural areas have no way to progress on their own, is there any external force to help them? Yes, Grameen Bank is doing this.

I have had the opportunity to participate in a ASDAN program co-hosted by the Grameen Bank, whose founder Muhammad Yunus won the Nobel Peace Prize. The Grameen bank has an international program that supports rural women to start their own businesses with a loan. In recent years, this program has been operating in the United States, the United Kingdom, China, and many other countries. I had the opportunity to participate in a research internship with Grameen China, which gave me the insight into a new model for helping women start their businesses: the Grameen model. The model includes a program manager finding five women in rural areas who know each other, forming a five-member support group, and giving them regular microloans to help them start their businesses.

Although because of the conflict between traditional commercial banks and Grameen banks, this project has not been successful in China in the past few years. This inspired me to find ways to solve the dilemma of female entrepreneurship, after seeing that there are organizations in the world doing their best to help women entrepreneurs.

From my point of view, advocating for gender equality and the benefit of entrepreneurship is the first and the most important step because it creates the intolerance of gender discrimination in the market environment. Only when women see the material and spiritual benefits of entrepreneurship can they truly take this step and female entrepreneurship can truly grow. At the same time, more people will pay attention to women's entrepreneurship and learn about the Grameen Model and in turn be willing to provide financial support for the cause. This will aid the implementation of the Grameen Model, thus encourages women entrepreneurship.

Through the abundance of social media platforms, the cost of advertisement is significantly reduced, so is the risk of entrepreneurship.

Furthermore, providing technical support for people in remote areas is crucial too. More people can then take advantage of this digital age with easy access to information on gender equality, women entrepreneurship, and media marketing.

### **Conclusion**

The development of female entrepreneurs from the beginning to the present is subject to traditional concepts also subject to the patriarchal society, these are not fatal, but implicitly influence the previous generation and the current generation of entrepreneurs. Today, with the rapid development of network information, we need to take advantage of the information technology media communication to vigorously promote views favorable to entrepreneurship; look at traditional concepts dialectically and insist on gender equality; encourage women to come out of their families and embrace entrepreneurship,

thus improving the traditional entrepreneurial environment. For the sake of our next generation of entrepreneurs and for the sake of the next generation of female entrepreneurs who can try to avoid being bound by traditional concepts, we should make such efforts, stand at the junction of history and the future, learn from the experience of past failures, summarize solutions of success, and look to the future, which is the responsibility of our generation.

The Barbadian singer Rihanna founded the brand, Fenty Beauty, so that women of any skin tone can find a foundation that suits them. Yang, Tianzhen, a famous celebrity agent and entrepreneur in China, founded the plus-size women's clothing company to challenge beauty standards. They are all excellent role models of female entrepreneurs. These examples demonstrate the demand for women entrepreneurs with unique perspectives. Female entrepreneurship will definitely become a future trend with the right environment and the future of women entrepreneurs is promising and worth of waiting.

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