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Women's entrepreneurship in rural Algeria: the case of Kabyle dresses seamstresses in Maâtkas (Tizi-Ouzou)

ريادة الأعمال النسائية في الريف الجزائري: حالة خياطات الفساتين القبائلية في معاتقة(تيزي وزو)

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Abstract :
The aim of this paperis to highlight women's entrepreneurship in a rural territorial area (the Maâtkas district). Through a questionnaire survey conducted among women entrepreneurs specializing in the making of Kabyle dresses, as well as interviews with elected local officials and organizers of the Maâtkas Kabyle dress festival.This study demonstrated that it is a necessity-based entrepreneurship practiced by women who do not necessarily have a high level of education but rather possess know-how, often inherited from their family circle. The family also plays a very important role in this business.

Keywords: Algeria; Dresses seamstresses; Kabylia; Necessity entrepreneurship; Women's entrepreneurship.

JEL classificationcodes :M13;O55 ; F63, L26

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1. Introduction :

Women's entrepreneurship is a relatively new academic topic in Algeria, as well as in developed countries, despite the fact that the problem is as extremely old as entrepreneurship and employment. Indeed, the topic of women's entrepreneurship underscores two fundamental realities: first, that entrepreneurship has long been noted without regard for gender, and second, that employment is a much larger concern.

However, even after forty years, the subject of women entrepreneurship is increasingly gaining centre stage in economic research; we recognize the difficulties of establishing this fact in the face of situational heterogeneity. Furthermore, in industrialized countries, most studies indicate that female entrepreneurship is primarily an urban phenomenon, the consequence of years of research and instruction. In these countries, female entrepreneurs frequently hold a university degree, which promotes and motivates their "autonomy." However, in this study, we are looking at an unusual situation of women entrepreneurship in the rural world, in which the actors are not necessarily educated but have resilience capacities that ought to be acknowledged.

The aim of this study is to address women's entrepreneurship in a rural territorial area, namely the Maâtkas district of Tizi-Ouzou. More specifically, it is a question of looking at the activity of making Kabyle dresses, which, a priori, is a typically feminine activity. Our problem revolves around the determinants of the choice of activity as well as the mode of operation and management of these workshops.

The significance of the action to which a local festival is even dedicated, namely the festival of the Kabyle dress of Maâtkas, determines the choice of this object.

Our methodological approach is structured around two main elements. First, using semi-structured interviews with local elected officials and organizers of the Kabyle dress festival of Maâtkas, we will provide an overview of this festival. Then, a field survey using a questionnaire, intended for 15 women entrepreneurs out of the 44 who participated in the second edition of the Kabyle dress festival of Maâtkas, which took place in the summer of 2024, will allow us to understand the motivations of women entrepreneurs and the way this entrepreneurship operates.

In the first section we deal with the concepts of entrepreneurship and female entrepreneurship as well as the Algerian context; then, in the second section we present our study area and our methodological approach and, finally, in the third section we present the results of our survey.

2. Womenentrepreneurship: concept and Algerian context

In this section, we firstly address the notion of entrepreneurship and the characteristics of female entrepreneurship, then secondly we focus on the Algerian context, highlighting in particular its specificities.

2.1. Entrepreneurship: what are we talking about?

The notion of entrepreneurship dates back to the 16th century with Savary in his book The Perfect Trader, dating from 1675. However, the first to theorize the concept was, according to historians and economists; Richard Cantillon (1680-1734) in his book Essay on the Nature of Commerce in General. Thus, Cantillon describes the entrepreneur "as an agent of management of production and commerce, who bears, alone, the risks linked to market constraints and price fluctuations" (quoted by Makni, 2012, p. 16). This vision of entrepreneurs taking risks in an uncertain environment, let us remember, concerns a time when commerce was an adventure linked to wealth which, among mercantilists, was embodied by precious metals and to one of the fundamental activities of the time, that of supplying weapons.

Thus, throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, economic activity was essentially dominated by merchants, traders, and large trading companies. It was the gold rush and privateering that later led to the birth of so-called merchant capitalism.

In the classics, the entrepreneur is sometimes dissociated from the holder of capital (the capitalist) (Smith, 1991), and sometimes the two agents are confused and form a single reality (Ricardo). Say (1972) goes further in his analysis and distinguishes the scientist who studies the laws of nature, the entrepreneur who benefits from his knowledge to create useful products and the worker who works under his orders. Hence,it should be outlined that we are in the era of the industrial revolution, the entrepreneur as well as the capitalist turning towards industry. Considering these conditions, the division of labour and the definition of tasks become an imperative to obtain

maximum profit. The entrepreneur is then, according to Say (1972), the one who, while taking risks, directs and organizes the work within his company.

Under these conditions; industrial or liberal capitalism is evolving, more and more, towards the large company. Thus, the work of Smith and Say on the division of labour supplemented by the work of Taylor on the Scientific Organization of Work and especially their implementation by Henry Ford in what would later become the Taylor-Fordism system resulted in the disappearance of the entrepreneur replaced by the manager. Thus, if Schumpeter (1979) regrets the disappearance of the entrepreneur, Galbraith (1969) for his part, considers that if the work of the entrepreneur had to continue to meet the objectives for which he had conceived it, his replacement becomes, on the other hand, inevitable, because he explains "the large company of the beginning of the 20th century practices all the activities which were formerly the responsibility of the individual owner or the small company. Only large companies can raise the necessary capital and mobilize the human skills required by a logic of high productivity" (Tounés and Fayolle, 2006, p. 22).

However, this vision of things, which predominated, in particular, during the thirty glorious years, was quickly called into question following the crisis of the 1970s. The virtues of small businesses were unearthed and re-examined, and we then spoke of its capacity to resist the crisis, its dynamism and, above all, its place in local development.

Writings on Italian industrial districts (Becatini, 1992) advocate the role of small businesses in value creation and as providers of employment. Small size facilitates flexibility and is more resilient to the crisis when large companies go bankrupt or relocate, leaving local areas without jobs or resources, in short, in crisis. Aydalot (1986) then speaks of a spatial reversal; developed regions enter into crisis at a time when rural areas, marginalized where small businesses proliferate, are more resilient to the crisis, better still Benko and Lipietz (1992) speak of regions that win over regions that lose. Behind this success, observed, after Italy, everywhere in Europe, lies a single entity: the small business and a single actor: the entrepreneur. As Makni (2012, p.6) points out, "Today, the entrepreneur is generally confused with the small business…he is consequently one of the elements of the environment through his

participation in the creation of businesses, employment and economic growth".Moreover, as Tounés and Fayolle (2006, p. 26) note, "he is no longer the hero who brings major innovations that will revolutionize society. He first creates his own job. He is very close to his local environment, his customers, his suppliers, his financiers and his other partners."

That being said, like Madaoui (2012, p 9) we consider that our "approach is intended to be the opposite of the perception of an "atomized" entrepreneur, cut off from the rest of society, a sort of "modern-day hero" who has built himself up, but rather of a socialized actor, deeply rooted and inserted into social networks (family, friends, community, ethnic, etc.) which serve as important resources for him."

In this context, small businesses, entrepreneurship, and subsequently women's entrepreneurship are becoming topical issues, increasingly highlighted in issues related to employment, local development, sustainable development and even the social and solidarity economy.

2.2.From entrepreneurship to female entrepreneurship

As we have highlighted above, female entrepreneurship emerged in this context of preference for small businesses that arose from the crisis of the 1970s. However, if the first works on female entrepreneurship were limited to studying it in comparison with male entrepreneurship, from the 2000s onwards, female entrepreneurship became an object in its own right. It was then "that some authors began to investigate the diversity of women entrepreneurs, relying mainly on the study of motivational factors" (D'Andriaand Gabarret, 2016, p. 93). It is, then, the motivations and typologies of these women entrepreneurs that attract the most attention from researchers. From a fairly substantial literature review of work on entrepreneurship in general and women's entrepreneurship in particular, D'Andria and Gabarret (2016), relying first on a previous work by Jennings and Brush (2013) covering 630 articles published between 1975 and 2012 and then on articles published between 2013 and 2015, revealed, on the basis of the 82 most relevant articles and reports, that entrepreneurship is either a voluntary choice or by opportunity or involuntary but rather by necessity. Thus the researchers speak of pull factors and push factors.

Push factors refer to necessity entrepreneurship driven by the search for employment, a difficult economic and social situation, etc. Pull

factors, on the other hand, concern the desire for autonomy, the need for achievement, social status and high income, etc.

Thus, regardless of the study context, the motivational aspects of entrepreneurship in general and women's entrepreneurship in particular are divided between entrepreneurship out of necessity (push factors) and entrepreneurship out of opportunity (pull factors).

Research on female entrepreneurship subsequently led to several classifications and typologies. Thus, D'Andria and Gabarret (2016) developed a typology in three categories: entrepreneurship by necessity, entrepreneurship by opportunity and entrepreneurship by work/family reconciliation. This last category refers to the choice of women to undertake to better manage family relationships in the case of work and particularly concerns mother entrepreneurs (mompreneurs). The D'Andria and Gabarret typology is similar to that of (Hughes, 2006) who also proposes a typology in three categories: forced entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship that combines work and family and classic entrepreneurship.

Furthermore, some authors propose more detailed classifications, such as the typology of (Bruni, Gherardi, & Poggio, 2004), which distinguishes between women who attemptsemployment due to unemployment, those who consider entrepreneurship as a long-term strategy, those who seek family/employment reconciliation, those who want to escape marginalization, those who take over a family business, those who return to active life after taking care of children, and finally, feminist women..

2.3. Women's entrepreneurship in Algeria: historical and theoretical overview

In Algeria, the phenomenon of entrepreneurship is very recent. Indeed, after its independence in 1962, Algeria chose the socialist (administered) path to escape its underdevelopment; in this path, the private sector is, in the words of Bernard Ch. (1988), under "supervised freedom" because it is considered an exploitative sector, unlike the public sector, which allows for salaried employment in a logic of appropriation of the means of production.

From the 1980s, the law of August 27-28, 1982 relating to the private sector gave new life to the private sector in Algeria, which was now accepted but still under the gaze of a planning and sometimes even restrictive state. However, the sudden fall in oil prices plunged Algeria, in 1986, into a crisis that was initially

financial and subsequently, notably from 1988, into a multidimensional crisis from 1982, the 1986 crisis which saw Algeria, under the impetus of the, take another

Under pressure from donors such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB), a structural adjustment program (SAP) was implemented in 1994, and a series of economic reforms were put in place to establish a new political and economic path: the transition to a market economy. It was in this context that a number of public companies, particularly local ones, were privatized, and the private sector was encouraged within the framework of a liberal economy.

In terms of statistical data, we noted that the number of private companies stabilized between 1962 and 1982. It increased from 110,513 establishments in 1964 to 9,387 units in 1980, rising to 12,000 companies in 1982 and then reaching 14,154 companies in 1984. Ten years later, this number exploded. Indeed, Nationalstatistics OfficeONS) statistics from 1995 show the existence of 236,298 private SMEs, 90% of which are very small businesses with fewer than 10 employees.

Since the new millennium, the growth of private SMEs has been increasingly confirmed. Thus, according to statistics from the Ministry of Industry, the number of SMEs increased from 244,570 private companies in 2001 to 618,515 private companies in 2010, reaching 1,209,491 companies in 2020. Finally, in 2022, the number of private SMEs reached 1,359,580, 98% of which are very small and employ more than 3 million workers (Ministry of Industry, 2023).

However, the statistics from the Ministry of Industry, which are based on social security affiliation (CNAS or CASNOS), provide no information on female entrepreneurship, so we turned to the statistics from the Ministry of Commerce, which are based on registration in the trade register.

Statistics from the Ministry of Commerce indicate that the number of economic operators (individuals and legal entities) registered in the commercial register will reach 2 290 743 in 2023, of which 187 741 are women, representing 8.20% of the total. This means that more than 90% of economic operators registered in the commercial register are men.

Finally, the statistics from the National Statistics Office (ONS) - which are the most comprehensive because they include, in addition

to those affiliated to social security, non-affiliates, i.e. informal workers - reveal that the number of employers and self-employed people in Algeria reached 3,473,000 individuals in 2019, of which 388,000 are womenentrepreneurs, i.e. 13.86% (see table 1).

Table 1: Evolution of women's and men's entrepreneurship in Algeria (2004-2019)

Year	Men (10^3)	%	Women (10^3)	%	Total
2004	1975	79,93	496	20,07	2471
2005	1870	85,66	313	14,34	2183
2006	2304	80,95	542	19,05	2846
2007	2185	86,88	330	13,12	2515
2008	2242	84,44	413	15,56	2655
2009	2327	84,25	435	15,75	2762
2010	2423	84,3	452	15,7	2874
2011	2598	87,68	366	12,32	2963
2012	2454	85,15	428	14,85	2882
2013	2672	85,72	445	14,28	3117
2014	2449	87,12	362	12,88	2811
2015	2674	87,9	368	12,1	3042
2016	2740	87,46	394	12,54	3133
2017	2782	85,97	454	14,03	3236
2018	2985	88,26	397	11,74	3382
2019	3085	88,83	388	11,17	3473

Source: Authors compilationbased onNational statistics Office "ONS" databases (2019)

However, if we compare this figure with that of 15 years ago (table 1), we see a decline in the proportion of women in total entrepreneurship. In fact, this proportion fell from 20.10% in 2004 to 11.17% in 2019, a loss of almost 9 points in 15 years.

Furthermore, in absolute terms, we observe a steady growth in male entrepreneurship, except for a few years (2007, 2012, and 2014), resulting in a number of entrepreneurs over the entire period that increased from 1 975 000 in 2004 to 3,085,000 in 2019. Conversely, for women'sentrepreneurship, we observe a stabilizing or even downward trend, falling from 496,000 businesses in 2004 to 388 000 businesses in 2019.

Regarding research or academic work on female entrepreneurship in Algeria, it should be noted that the initial studies focused on entrepreneurship as a whole, particularly on emerging or resilient

private enterprises. Thus, the first studies conducted by AARDES (1975), Peneff (1982), and Liabes (1984) focused primarily on the strategies of Algerian private employers to survive in the era of the socialist economy.

It was not until the late 1990s that the first studies on women's employment and entrepreneurship emerged in Algeria. And as Abedou and Hammache (2023, 52) explain, three fields of scientific research are addressed in studies on women's entrepreneurship in Algeria:

1. The first field concerns the issue of women's empowerment through entrepreneurship.
2. The second field relates to the work on the process, methods and difficulties of business creation by women.
3. Finally, the last field brings together work which deals with the weight of the environment and the obstacles to the development of female entrepreneurship in Algeria.

That being said, several aspects are addressed in the studies on women's entrepreneurship in Algeria, including motivational factors, success factors, but also factors blocking the development of women's entrepreneurship in Algeria. However, most of the studies focus on educated women (Laib, Saibi, and Abadli, 2018) and those living in urban areas (Abedou, Bouyakoub, and Kherbachi, 2012). Very few studies deal with women's entrepreneurship in rural areas (Gherbi, 2016; Benhabib, 2017; Smadi 2018).

3. Presentation of the study area and survey methodology

In order to study women'sentrepreneurship in Algeria, we are interested in women heads of Kabyle dressmaking businesses in the Maâtkas district, which belongs to the city of Tizi-Ouzou. Thus, we first present our study area, namely the Maâtkas district, and then we discuss our survey methodology.

3.1.Presentation of the Maâtkas district

The Maâtkas district, our study area for this project, comprises two municipalities: Maâtkas and Souk El Tenine. It is located about twenty kilometres southwest of the city of Tizi-Ouzou. Geographically, it belongs to the central Kabyle Massif and is bordered by the following districts: Tizi-Ouzou and Drâa Ben Khedda to the north; Beni Douala to the east; Drâa El Mizan to the west; Ouadhia to the southwest; and Boghni to the south.

Paradoxically, the territory of Maâtkas is considered an urban area by the National Statistics Office due to its population density and the size of the urban area.

In fact, the latest statistical data collected in the 2020 Tizi-Ouzou statistical yearbook gives a population density of 739 inhabitants/km² for Souk El Tenine and 731 inhabitants/km² for Maâtkas; while the average density in the Tizi-Ouzou city is 403 inhabitants/km².

Regarding population dispersion, we learn from the 2008 RGPH data that 99% of the population of the commune of Souk El Tenine is urbanized, while for the commune of Maâtkas, the population agglomeration in the capital is 81%. This leads the authors of the RGPH to state that both communes are urban.

We consider, for our part, that this criterion alone is insufficient to determine the urban character or not of a geographical area, particularly in the case of mountainous regions with an agricultural vocation with some often traditional and/or informal craft units. In addition, after more than thirty years of promotion in Daïra, Maâtkas does not yet have a bank headquarters and the cultural and sports infrastructures are in the process of extinction; apart from the youth centre of Maâtkas which is distinguished by its apparent dynamism and diverse activities, the cinema has been closed for about thirty years and the land of the municipal stadium of the commune of Souk-El-Tenine has been transformed into a hospital, because due to lack of land base, the local authorities had to choose between a municipal stadium and a hospital.

For a long time, it should be remembered that the two communes of Maâtkas and Souk-el-Tenine, like many communes in the city of Tizi-Ouzou, have been agricultural communes with a predominance of arboriculture, particularly olive trees. Craftsmanship is also an omnipresent activity among these sedentary populations. Craftsmanship is a very popular activity in Kabylia; one is even tempted to say that "Kabylia is the homeland of traditional craftsmanship" (Dahmani, 2021, p. 41). Thus, each village and even each family has its preferred trade, while some families manufacture several types of objects according to their needs. These activities mostly use local raw materials or those purchased from other parts of Algeria.

3.2.Research methodology

It was in the context of a study on events in the Maâtkas region that Babou and Bounoua (2025) rediscovered the importance of the Kabyle dress-making activity in this region. In fact, in a previous work (Babou, 2007) he had already shown interest in the clothing-making workshops of Maâtkas, which specialized in particular in children's jeans.
Thus, in our event study, we identified five local festivals that take place each year in the Maâtkas district: the pottery festival, the Kabyle dress festival, the olive tree festival in the village of Ait Zaim, the amateur theatre festival in the village of Bouhamdoune, and the Renc'art festival in the village of Ighendoussen.

The second edition of the Maâtkas Kabyle dress festival, which took place in July 2024, is an unusual celebration, supported exclusively by the women's associations of Maâtkas (the Ait Zaim Women's Association, the Ighil Tekdivine Women's Association, and the Tighilt Mahmoud Women's Association). The president of the second edition in 2024 described it as a resounding success.
The idea was born among these women, jealous of their clothing heritage, as a form of resilience in the face of the unbridled modernization of the Kabyle dress, at a time when the Kabyle dress of Maâtkas, with its particular zigzag decorations, is almost unknown to new generations. These women do not reject modernity but campaign for the preservation of their identities.

Unlike the first edition, where the exhibitors were exclusively women, in the second edition, some male exhibitors were able to participate in the event with various products such as black pottery, honey, jewellery, and sieve making and repair. It is worth noting that this second edition saw the participation of no fewer than 66 exhibitors, including 44 women exhibitors of Kabyle dresses.
It is therefore these 44 dresses seamstressesthat we targeted for this study. To better understand the Kabyle dressmaking activity of Maâtkas, we developed a questionnaire containing 50 questions, about forty of which were closed-ended. This field survey took place in January and February 2025, most of them in workshops, others during the Yennayer festivities (fairs) (AmazighNew Year, which corresponds to January 12) organized in the city of Tizi-Ouzou. In fact, after their participation in the Kabyle dress festival of Maâtkas, most of these women entrepreneurs are often asked to participate in events that take place in other regions of the city and even in other cities. However, due to time constraints and the inability to contact all women entrepreneurs, we were only able to collect 15 of the 44 questionnaires, representing a sample of 34%, which we consider

representative (more than a third), given the amount of information collected.

Before presenting the results of our survey, we first provide a brief overview of employment and occupation in the Maâtkas district.
In 2020, the statistical yearbook of the Tizi-Ouzou province provides valuable information on employment indicators, particularly the distribution of the employed population by gender and sector of activity.

Table 2: Distribution of the employed population by gender and sector of activity

Sector of activity	Men	Women	Total
Administration	42249	45948	88197
Construction & public works	71250	5682	76932
Agriculture	14430	962	15392
Industry	23439	12774	36213
Commerce & services	121224	32768	153992
Total	**272592**	**98134**	**370726**

Source: Statistical yearbook of Tizi-Ouzou, (2020)

Table 2 shows us that the number of women employed in 2020 in the city of Tizi-Ouzou is 98,134 women, representing a rate of 26.57% of all employed people. Compared to national data (18.27% of employed people are women in 2019), this rate is significantly higher with a difference of 8 points. In addition, the distribution by sector of activity shows that in administration, the number of employed women exceeds that of men, while in industry, employed women also represent a significant rate with 35.27%. However, we do not have a distribution by employees/entrepreneurs to better evaluate all of this data.

Although we lack sufficient detail, the Tizi-Ouzou statistical yearbook (2020) informs us that the employed population in the municipality of Souk-El-Tenine was 4075 individuals for a total population of 15 564 in 2020, while in the municipality of Maâtkas, for the same period, the employed population reached 8613 individuals for a total population of 33 297.

Regarding entrepreneurship in the province of Tizi-Ouzou, regardless of the source of information, we observe that the province

of Tizi-Ouzou is ranked among the most dynamic regions in the country. Indeed, the first economic census (National statistics Office, 2012) informs us that the city of Tizi-Ouzou is ranked fourth at the national level in terms of the number of economic entities with 37 276 economic entities in 2011. In first position is Algiers with 97 019 entities followed by Oran and Sétif with respectively 52,852 and 47 392 economic entities.

The annual statistics of the Ministry of Industry give us the same information on the position of Tizi-Ouzou in terms of the number of SMEs, which, depending on the year, is between third and fifth place. Finally, the statistics of the Ministry of Commerce indicate that at the end of 2023, the number of economic operators (natural persons) operating in the city of Tizi-Ouzou is 84 715 traders. For legal entities and for the same period, 7,078 companies are listed. This gives a total of 91793 economic operators registered in the commercial register at the end of 2023.

The statistical yearbook of the province of Tizi-Ouzou gives us the number of 91 067 traders for 2020, an increase of more than 600 traders between 2020 and 2023. This increase is considered significant following the COVID-19 health crisis. Regarding crafts, the same statistical yearbook gives us the figure of 14 888 artisans in the province of Tizi-Ouzou in 2020.

As of March 31, 2025, the Tizi-Ouzou Tourism and Crafts Department estimates a total of 16 813 artisans in the Tizi-Ouzou province, representing nearly 2000 new artisans between 2020 and 2025. This increase is due not only to the actual increase in the number of artisans but also to the fact that some artisans, as we will see in our survey, have chosen to move away from the informal sector.
Finally, in the Maâtkas district, the number of artisans as of the end of March 2025 reached 172 artisans in the municipality of Souk-El-Tenine and 416 artisans in the municipality of Maâtkas.

4. **Results and discussion**

Let us first recall that to report on the reality of female entrepreneurship in Algeria we conducted a field survey on women owners of Kabyle dress-making units in the Maâtkas district. Thus, in this subsection we deal with the profile of women entrepreneurs, the financing of their activities, employment as well as the management of their workshops.

4.1.Profiles of women entrepreneurs in Maâtkas

Let us first emphasize that, given the specificity of the activity, especially in a rural area where diversity is not always accepted, women are the only ones authorized to manage their businesses, especially since women constitute the exclusive clientele of the Kabyle dress; thus, all the businesses surveyed are headed by a woman. In fact, while some businesses specializing in the sale of Kabyle dresses are run by men, the Kabyle dress-making workshops in Maâtkas are all exclusively managed by women. On the other hand, in a previous work, we have conducted a study on the making of other types of clothing in Maâtkas where men are exclusively business leaders (Babou, 2017). There is then a certain division of tasks between men and women in Maâtkas as elsewhere throughout Kabylia, far from the idea of male domination but in the sense of cohabitation and complementarity between men and women.

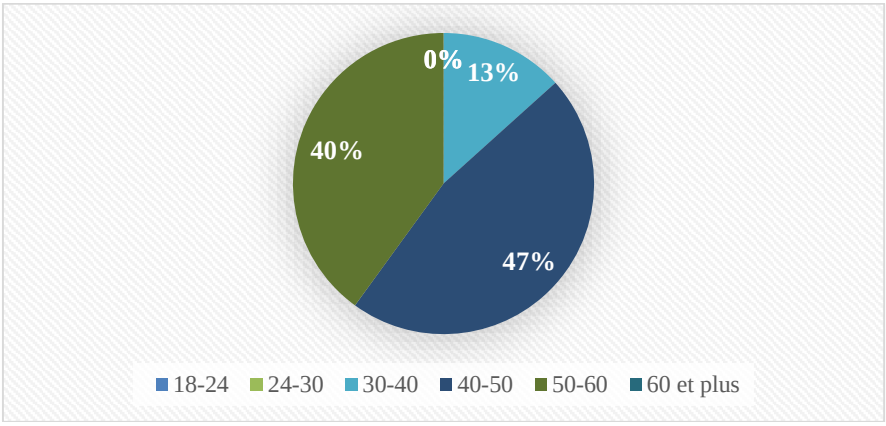
These women, who are mostly married (11 out of the 15 surveyed), only one is divorced, another is widowed, and two are single, actively participate, according to their statements, not only in daily domestic tasks (cooking, cleaning, raising children, etc.) but also help their husbands meet increasingly high expenses. Managing family affairs is a priority for these women business owners.

It should also be noted that given the small size of these businesses and the specific nature of the activity, demand for this type of product peaks in the summer, the wedding season. The women work full-time in the summer and work up to 14 to 16 hours a day, but the rest of the year this activity partially occupies these women.

Furthermore, as we see in Figure 1, 47% of the women surveyed are between 40 and 50 years old, and 40% are between 50 and 60 years old. This means that 87% of women entrepreneurs are over 40 years old.

We also examined the career paths of these women to verify whether they correspond to Lopez-Castano's (1989) three-phase socio-professional mobility model, which suggests that individuals begin their professional careers as informal employees, move into formal employment from the age of 20, and become self-employed or small business owners from the age of 40.

Figure 1: Distribution of surveyed women by age



Source: Survey data

The majority of the women surveyed (12 out of 15) began their activity as apprentices or family helpers in the family home around the age of 10 to 16. Only three entrepreneurs learned the trade in a clothing workshop and experienced the salaried phase. Otherwise, the other women learned the activity on the job (from mothers, other family members and even neighbours) and began their activity at home. However, it should be noted that most of the women surveyed (73%) followed training courses of three to eighteen months, to improve their work techniques, these are training courses in sewing/tailoring, stylist/pattern making and even embroidery.

That said, all the women surveyed had gone through the home-based business phase, and for three of the women entrepreneurs, this is still the case. For ten entrepreneurs, the awareness-raising campaigns of the Chamber of Trades and Crafts, as well as their participation in the Kabyle dress festival in Maâtkas, successfully brought these women out of the shadows (informal sector). Two others chose to emerge from the shadows to benefit from the advantages that visibility offers for the success of their business in the face of increasing competition.

It should be noted that in recent years, several Kabyle dress-making workshops have tended to be more visible. The entrepreneurs locate their workshops around the town centres (Maâtkas and Souk-El-Tenine), near major thoroughfares, making sure to display their products in the window. The workshop thus becomes a place of production and a place of sale, a boutique workshop. If it weren't for the often closed door and the sign that says dresses seamstressesor Kabyle dress workshop, it's hard not to confuse these workshops with a store selling Kabyle dresses.

Regarding the level of education, we learned from the questionnaire that only one female entrepreneur has a university level and three female entrepreneurs (20%) have a secondary level. Most of the women surveyed (73%) do not exceed the average level. More precisely, 40% of the women entrepreneurs have an average level, 20% have a primary level and finally two of the women surveyed (13%) have never been to school. This suggests a lack of correlation between a high level of education and orientation towards entrepreneurship. Rather, necessity is the main motivation, as we will see in the rest of this work.

4.2. Motivations and reasons for women's entrepreneurship

To identify the motivational factors that led these seamstresses into entrepreneurship, we examined their personal trajectories, the reasons behind their choice of activity, and the impact of their work on their economic and social status.

The path to entrepreneurship proved to be long and complex. Even though the activity might appear easily accessible, these women had to overcome significant obstacles to become owners of their own production means.

The transition from home-based work to owning a workshop was particularly difficult. Apart from two women who own their premises and three who still work at home, two-thirds of the surveyed women run their activity in rented premises, with all the financial costs and risks of eviction that this entails.

The narratives of these women about their early careers leave no doubt: theirs is an entrepreneurship of necessity**.** Often, it was undertaken to meet family needs, particularly when the husband passed away, lost his job, or earned a salary insufficient to cover household expenses.

The workshops we visited confirmed this reality. They are generally small, modest, and poorly equipped. Only one woman owns a vehicle; the others often face delays due to lack of personal transportation.

Despite these constraints, the women exercise their activity with passion and dedication. When asked about their reasons for choosing this line of work, all of them first highlighted their attachment to the craft itself, and secondly, the fact that it provides for their livelihood. The desire for independence and self-fulfilment was cited by only three women, while perpetuating family heritage was mentioned by five.

With regard to the economic and social outcomes, all the surveyed women agreed that the activity enables them to live decently and meet their family's needs. They also observed that the activity is currently expanding, with a noticeable increase in their turnover in recent years. Importantly, they emphasized the positive role of the institutionalization of the Kabyle Dress Festival in boosting the activity both regionally and nationally, enhancing the reputation of Maâtkas and the Kabyle dress as a cultural product.

4.3. Financing and Employment: The Role of Family Networks

Both financing and recruitment in Kabyle dress-making workshops underscore the decisive role of family networks. Financing is usually a combination of self-financing and family contributions. Only one entrepreneur accessed bank funding through the ANSEJ scheme. In general, women entrepreneurs rarely seek bank loans, considering the process either too complicated (50% of cases) or unnecessary (50%).

As for employment, these are very small businesses, typically employing fewer than five people. Activity is at its peak during spring and summer, while from October to March, work is significantly reduced, sometimes to fewer than four hours a day. It is noteworthy that 93% of businesses work directly with clients based on orders, while only one delivers to shops.

Since their participation in the Kabyle Dress Festival of Maâtkas, these women have been invited by public institutions (Chamber of Crafts, Directorate of Culture, local associations, etc.) to participate in other cultural events, such as the Amazigh New Year celebrations ("Yennayer"). On such occasions, they are encouraged to innovate and present collections as a kind of brand image, which pushes them to adapt their production and marketing strategies.

Currently, recruitment is largely family-based and seasonal, but entrepreneurs are increasingly obliged to hire qualified staff to cope with these new demands. Two possible strategies could address this situation: either increasing the business capital to meet higher demand or cooperating with other businesses.

From the earliest studies by Liabès (1984) to more recent ones by Babou (2024), family networks have consistently played a central role in the financing and recruitment of Algerian private businesses, bringing advantages (speed, availability of funds, free family labour, etc.) but also disadvantages (undeclared labour, dependence on larger merchants, etc.).

Few of the surveyed businesses hire qualified, declared employees. Instead, most operate as family-based enterprises where all members contribute to production, distribution, and even negotiation. The workforce is mostly made up of apprentices and family helpers, rarely salaried employees. In some cases, particularly in summer, part of the production is subcontracted to women working at home, with profit-sharing arrangements.

The few entrepreneurs (33% of respondents) who hire salaried workers in summer usually do so without complying with labour regulations. The only exception is the enterprise financed by ANSEJ, which operates year-round and declares its employees, although 80% of its workforce still comes from the family circle.

Finally, the availability of qualified labour remains a challenge. According to the surveyed women, once workers gain experience, they often leave to start their own independent activity.

5. Conclusion:

This study revealed that women's entrepreneurship in Kabyle dress-making in Maâtkas is essentially an **e**ntrepreneurship of necessity, undertaken by women to cope with the precarious situation of their households. More specifically, unemployment, the death of the husband, or his insufficient income are the main drivers that push women toward entrepreneurship.

This form of entrepreneurship also reflects an effort to reconcile family life with professional activity and underscores the central role of the family in the functioning of the business from financing to management and employment.Moreover, the Kabyle Dress Festival of Maâtkas has had a positive impact on the development of this activity and on women's entrepreneurship. These businesses have not only emerged from informality but are also adopting more modern management practices. Extending such festivals to other traditional products at the national level, and increasing the involvement of public institutions, could bring significant benefits to the Algerian economy.

However, the results of this study cannot be generalized to all women's entrepreneurship in Algeria. Broader research should be undertaken, particularly by examining the experiences of women entrepreneurs specializing in Kabyle dress-making in other communes of Tizi-Ouzou and in other cities across the country.

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