

Female Self-Entrepreneurship and Local Politics: Is There a Role Model Effect? An Analysis of Italian Municipalities

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The aims of this paper are (i) to estimate the relationship between the presence of females in the local political arena and female self-entrepreneurship and (ii) to explore whether and how this relationship is moderated by the degree of gender equality in the local context. By using detailed municipality-level data and rich fixed effects regressions, coupled with instrumental variable estimations, we find that higher female participation in the local political environment is associated with a stronger weight of female entrepreneurs. However, this overall positive relationship is substantially different based on the level of gender equality of the municipality. Such a within-gender effect appears to only emerge in less gender-equal contexts, coherently with the idea that the “disruptive” potential of females in politics is bigger as the surrounding local context is more distant from gender equality.