How Startup Accelerators Enhance Women Entrepreneurship in Israel

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The literature suggests four specific barriers to women entrepreneurship: lack of specific entrepreneurial human capital, lack of business-oriented networks, low level of entrepreneurial self-efficacy, and low legitimacy in the entrepreneurial ecosystem. We argue that startup accelerators might be relevant to dealing with these barriers. Startup accelerator programs show four central characteristics that might help in reducing the barriers to women entrepreneurship: an educational component, a wide network, formal mentorship, and reputation. We present evidence on the participation rate of women founders in Israeli accelerators (more than twice their rate in the general population). We further compare the progress of female and male startup founders during the acceleration program and show that women progressed more in aspects related to the barriers to women entrepreneurship, as assessed through self-reports. This study has important policy implications for the use of accelerators to support and enhance women entrepreneurship.