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Besschetnova O.V., Volkova O.A., Ostavnaja A.N.

WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS' MOTIVATIONS TO START UP BUSINESS IN RUSSIA: DEMOGRAPHIC CONTEXT

Besschetnova Oksana Vladimirovna,

*PhD in Sociology, head of the International Sector of State Budgetary Research
Institute for Healthcare Organization and Medical Management of Moscow
Healthcare Department, Moscow, Russia,
e-mail: oksanabesschetnova@yandex.ru*

Volkova Olga Alexandrovna,

*PhD in Sociology, a Chief Researcher, Institute of Demographic Research of the
Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, Russia,
e-mail: volkovaoa@rambler.ru*

Ostavnaja Alla Nikolaevna,

*an Assistant Professor of Sociology Department, Pridnestrovian State University
after T.G. Shevchenko, Tiraspol, Republic of Moldova,
e-mail: alaost@rambler.ru*

Abstract

Historically, entrepreneurship has been the exclusive prerogative of men, and Russia is no exception with its traditional distribution of social and family roles and statuses. Over the past century, a big step forward has been made in achieving gender equality, as a result of which modern women entrepreneurs have begun to play an important role in the structure of the Russian business community. Despite the achieved results, women entrepreneurs continue to face universal specific problems in running business: gender stereotypes; vertical and horizontal occupational segregation; double employment in connection with the birth and upbringing of children. The aim of the article is to identify the main motives of women entrepreneurs to start their own business. The main research method was a formalized interview; the search for informants was carried out by the "snowball" method. The study was involved women living in Saratov region aged of 32–69 years, who have owned their own business for at least three years. Research results: it was found, that the main motives of women's

entrepreneurship include changes in material, social and personal status through upward social mobility; increasing the level and quality of family members' lives; the improvement of professional skills and the realization of human potential. The factors hindering the development of women's entrepreneurship are the lack of material and financial resources; lack of professional education; high risks in a situation of instability; personal factors.

Keywords: business, entrepreneurship, women, motivation, demographics, research

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Introduction

Nowadays the development of women's entrepreneurship in Russian society is the most dynamically developing sector of small and medium-sized businesses. Firstly, it plays an important role in the structural adjustment and stimulation of the economic growth of Russian economy; secondly, it increases the productivity of the labor market; thirdly, it helps to deal with unemployment as well as to form conditions for long-term socio-economic and political stability in the country. In this regard, currently the analysis of patterns, mechanisms and motives for the inclusion of women in entrepreneurial activity are the most relevant.

The structure of Russian entrepreneurship has a gender imbalance: in 2018 the number of male entrepreneurs was 55,9% in the total volume of entrepreneurs (Verkhovskaya, et al., 2019). For example, women entrepreneurs at the beginning of their business career reached 47,0%, among established entrepreneurs – 44,0% (Pinkovetskaya, 2019).

Over the past decade, there was an abrupt change in the indicators of women's entrepreneurship activity: we could see the decrease in 2012 and 2014, an increase in 2013 and 2016, followed by a decline in 2018 and in 2020. In most cases men are more prone to risky entrepreneurial behavior, initiating start-ups, despite the crisis, while women are more often involved in established businesses; prefer hiring to

start their own business in economic unstable periods.

However, despite the current socio-economic and political conditions in the country and in the world as a whole, from 2008 to 2016 the level of women's entrepreneurial activity at the initial stage of running business increased in 3.6 times (2012 – 1,9%; 2013 – 2,8%; 2014 – 1,8%; 2016 – 2,7%) (Verkhovskaya, et al., 2019); the number of stable-working enterprises managed by women increased in 2,7 times over the last 3,5 years (Pinkovetskaya, 2019).

Literature review

The foundations of the study of entrepreneurship, its functions and significance for society we can find in outstanding scientific works, written by D. Clark, P. Drucker, F. Knight, K. Marx, A. Smith, M. Weber and others.

Among modern foreign studies, dedicated to the issues of entrepreneurship, we should mention the works of S. Bhagavatula, T. Elfring, A. Van Tilburg, G. G. Van De Bunt (social and human capital) (Bhagavatula, et al., 2010); N. Bosma, J. Hessels, V. Schutjens, M. Van Praag, I. Verheul (the impact of role models on starting business) (Bosma, et al., 2012); G. Bruton, D. Ahlstrom, H.L. Li (entrepreneurship in institutional theory) (Bruton, et al., 2010); D. Dohse and S.G. Walter (strategies for professional choice of youth) (Dohse, Walter, 2012); G. Criaco, P. Sieger, K. Wennberg, F. Chirico, T. Minola (the role of the parent example and strategies for choosing

a business career for children) (Criaco, et al., 2017); D. Giménez, A. Calabrò (the role of social institutions in the development of women's entrepreneurship) (Giménez, Calabrò, 2018); D.C. North (the role of formal and informal social institutions in the economy and labor market's development) (North, 1990); F.B. Zapkau, C. Schwens, R. Kabst (reasons and motives for starting one's own business) (Zapkau, et al., 2017] and others.

There are much less modern Russian researchers, who are exploring this particular subject, firstly, due to the growth of patriarchal traditions still dominated in Russian society, secondly, to the lack of gender studies in general. Russian scientists of female entrepreneurship are A. V. Alimpieva (women's behavioral strategies in business; the impact of entrepreneurship on family life) (Alimpieva, 2017); A.V. Orlova (methodology for empirical analysis of female entrepreneurship) (Orlova, 2018); Yu. S. Pinkovetskaya (business management issues) (Pinkovetskaya, 2019); Z. I. Raimanova (barriers inhibiting the development of female entrepreneurship) (Raimanova, 2018); R. I. Semenov, I. N. Tkachenko (gender aspects of female entrepreneurship) (Semenov, 2018; Tkachenko, 2017).

Some foreign researchers consider entrepreneurship as a construct consisting of two components: instrumental, including beliefs, thoughts, and rational arguments (Liñán, Fayolle, 2015) and affective, including feelings, emotions, satisfaction, and behavior (Fernandes, Proença, 2013). There are at least three main factors, influencing the decision-making process to start up business: institutional, individual/personal and socio-cultural.

Institutional factors. Followers of Institutional theory (North, 1990; Bruton, 2010; Welter, Smallbone, 2011) indicate the existence of formal (laws, regulations, norms) and informal (culture, traditions of gender distribution of male and female roles, individualism, infrastructure) social institutions

in society and their impact on the development of female entrepreneurship.

The family as a social institution plays a crucial role in the formation of professional strategies of the younger generation, along with other agents of socialization. Parents act as early role models for their children in the process of choosing professional strategies and can serve as a source of knowledge, experience, information and support (Hickie, 2011). Parents who are running business increase the likelihood that their children will continue family business or start a new one. This influence is especially noticeable in the period of young adulthood (18–21 years), less often in adolescence (12–17 years) and childhood (8–11 years) (Criaco, et al., 2017).

Individual/personal factors. A number of scientists pay attention to the role of personal characteristics of an individual in choosing employment (Bhagavatula, et al., 2010; Giménez, Calabrò, 2018; Alimpieva, 2017). In many countries entrepreneurship traditionally is seen as a field of men's activity due to the masculine qualities such as independence, perseverance, assertiveness, autonomy or risk, unlike women who are stereotypically endowed with such characteristics as weakness, emotionality, vulnerability, which directly affect their choice of professional education, future employment and career, forming the conjuncture of the labor market in general.

Socio-cultural factors. In addition to the individual characteristics of a person that influence the decision to start one's own business, environmental factors such as culture, mentality, customs, gender roles, equality of men and women's rights *de jure* and *de facto* in a particular society are also important.

C.C. Baughn, B.L. Chua, and K.E. Neupert stress the gender dimension of entrepreneurship, noting that cultural patterns affect men and women differently: in countries with a high level of entrepreneurial culture there are more women entrepreneurs (Baughn, et al., 2006).

D. Dohse and S.G. Walter emphasize that the transfer of positive business experience from a successful entrepreneur to a newcomer through imitation promotes the rapid transmission and assimilation of knowledge, skills, and competencies, and provides access to information and resources, stimulating entrepreneurial behavior. In addition, the close proximity to a successfully functioning business is not only a positive motivation for starting a new business, but also a way of forming an entrepreneurial culture in the local community, which helps to create an entrepreneurial network (Dohse, Walter, 2012).

Another characteristic of social structure of the society is the “individual – collective” dichotomy (Hofstede, 2011). So in individualistic societies (USA, Australia, Great Britain) priority is given to economics, business, individual achievements and success, the prevalence of individual over collective consciousness, which opens up opportunities for a person to realize his/her abilities regardless of gender, including the field of entrepreneurship as well. At the same time, in collectivist societies (Chile, Greece, Mexico), the solidarity of its members reproduces and preserves the traditional patriarchal way of life, gender division of roles, suggesting the need for concern for members of an extended family, which is an additional motive for starting the business.

The balance of professional and reproductive functions performed by a working woman is a debatable issue that is differently addressed within the framework of the state social or family policy as well as the socio-cultural context of a country (Gimenez, Calabrò, 2018). The length of parental leave may be a predictor of women's entrepreneurial activity: in countries with liberal or conservative family policies, after giving birth most women have to return to work more quickly, to choose part-time jobs to cover the cost of expensive child care or, on the contrary, quit the job and take care of a child themselves. In this regard, opening

up business is seen as a balanced solution to combine employment and childcare.

In countries with an average parental leave (up to 6 months), there is less fear of losing jobs, because both parents can take care of children regardless the gender roles. In welfare countries with pro-family social policies, women have a lower level of entrepreneurial activity (Denmark, Sweden, Norway) compared to countries where childcare benefits are low or non-existent (Canada, USA, Australia) (Thébaud, 2016). Also some groups of women lose their professional skills and competencies in the labor market due to caring for the children for a long period of time that negatively correlates with their professional employment and career. Thus, equal opportunity policies need to be framed for women entrepreneurs, including well-defined property rights, transparency and the rule of law.

Main part

According to The Global Entrepreneurship Index in 2018, the top leaders in terms of entrepreneurship development in the world were USA, Switzerland, Canada, Great Britain and Australia respectively. Russia took the 78th place in the list of 137 countries (Ács, et. al., 2018).

The results of the study, conducted in 2018 by the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) allowed to compile the socio-demographic portrait of a modern Russian entrepreneur, based on the multi-stage stratified probabilistic sample of population aged 18–64 (n = 2002).

In gender structure of Russian entrepreneurship men were traditionally dominated – 55,9%. The average age of a Russian entrepreneur was 39 years: for an early entrepreneur – 35 years, for a distinguished entrepreneur – 43 years.

There were three age groups, which were most represented in entrepreneurial activity: 25–34 years, 35–44 years, and 45–54 years. In 2018, a decline in entrepreneurial activity was recorded in almost all age groups. At the early stage of business management,

the proportion of young people aged 18–24 was 13,6%, for the group aged 35–44 it was 23,6%, and the older group aged 55–64 was 7,3%. Among distinguished entrepreneurs, representatives of the middle age group (35–44 years old) predominated – 35,8%. The entrepreneurs of other age groups noticeably lagged behind: 45–54 years old – 24,2%; 25–34 years old and 55–64 years old for 20% each; young people aged 18–24 was less than 1%. Thus, the youngest group aged 18–24 years and representatives of the oldest group aged 55–64 were less involved in entrepreneurship than other socio-demographic groups.

More than half of the early entrepreneurs (54,5%) had secondary education, and 37,3% had higher education; in the group of distinguished entrepreneurs, there was no gap between entrepreneurs with higher and secondary education and amounted to 47,4% for both categories. The analysis of statistical data allows us to conclude that in times of crisis the share of entrepreneurs with higher education is reduced, while the share of entrepreneurs with secondary education, on the contrary, is growing. This may indicate that people with higher education in adverse socio-economic conditions often turn to a more stable source of income – wage labor compared to people with secondary education. In addition, the development of entrepreneurial activity depends on the region and locality, as well as the availability of infrastructure, income and population density. The greatest growth in entrepreneurial activity was observed in cities with the population of one million people (8,2%) and in cities with a population of 500 000 to 1 million inhabitants (6,1%), the worst indicators were in rural areas (4,7%).

Thus, the socio-demographic portrait of a successful Russian entrepreneur is as follows: a man, 35–44 years old, with higher education, living in a big city with developed infrastructure, resources and the availability of business management opportunities.

According to The Global Competitiveness Report for 2016–2017, the amount of women in the labor force in Russia compared to men was estimated through the index from 1 to 7 as 0,86, which put Russia in 50th place in the list of 138 countries. In 2016, the ratio of female and male entrepreneurial activity in the early stages of running business in the world was 0,83, i.e. 10 male entrepreneurs accounted for 8,3 female entrepreneurs; the same indicator for a functioning business corresponded to 0,77 or 10 for 7,7 respectively (Schwab, Sala-i-Martin, 2017).

Based on the data, presented by the Global Entrepreneurship and Development Institute (GEDI), which calculates the Female Entrepreneurship Index (FEI), Russia ranked 56th place among 77 countries in the world in 2015. The top ten took the USA, Australia, Great Britain, Denmark, the Netherlands, France, Iceland, Sweden, Finland, and Norway respectively (Terjesen, Lloyd, 2015).

However, in 2018, the percentage of forced early entrepreneurial activity was significantly higher among women compared with men – 48,8% and 34,3% respectively. Women stated that they had joined the business due to the lack of other job options (Verkhovskaya, et. at., 2019).

In Russia, the amount of women leaders in large financial corporations is still one of the lowest rates among developed countries (about 2%). For example, in 2016 in Norway this indicator was 45,4%, in France – 42,0%, in Sweden – 38,3%, in Turkey – 11,1% (Tkachenko, 2017). At the same time, one of the recent global trends, including Russia, is the gradual shift from the male management style, which has long dominated the organization's management, to the female one (Kelan, 2008), which is characterized by such qualities as empathy, emotionality, flexibility, communication, willingness to help, trust, maintaining relationships, the need for exchange of information between partners, which is the

keystone to successful cooperation and management.

Methods and materials

The purpose of the research is to explore the mechanisms and motivations of including women in entrepreneurship. The study was conducted in 2019–2020 in Saratov region (Russia) by the method of formalized interview. The sample consisted of women-entrepreneurs aged 32–69 ($n=76$) who had run their own business for more than three years. All of them were divided into three groups: business owners who had beauty salon, gym, café, flower or clothes shops; working or retired old people who sale agricultural products, produced by themselves, in the market and self-employed women, working in the field of tutoring, baking cakes, making cheeses, etc.

In general the informants' specialization was as follows: trade – 35,5%, production of goods – 25,0%, and providing services – 39,5%. In most cases the research was carried out in the respondents' workplace, less often in a cafe or another public place. The sample was formed by the snowball method and had the following socio-economic characteristics: 61,8% of women had higher education, 35,5% had vocational education; 69,7% were married and had children. All informants had had the experience of hired work from 5 to 15 years. About 64,5% of women mainly of retirement age stressed the compulsion of starting up business at the initial stage due to several reasons: reduction / dismissal from a state enterprise, long period of unemployment, low income, the need of taking care of dependents, as well as the positive experience of neighbors, friends or community members and the family support.

Results

During the interview, the main motives of informants for opening up the business were identified as follows: providing for themselves and earning income – 56,6%; being independent, realizing ideas and plans – 25,0%; getting skills, experience

and qualification in a particular type of economics – 11,8%; taking care of children and relatives – 3,9%; maintaining professional and social status – 2,7 %. There are some excerpts from interviews:

“The pension is small, you know... I can't live on it, but here I'm earning some money, so I can pay for the apartment and buy food... Also I am outside all day long. Yes, here you will find out all the news” (female, 68 years old, pensioner).

“Yes, at first it was scary when you work at a state enterprise like everyone ... Every day you go to work, even though they pay you a penny, but anyway, it seems like it should be like this. And then they fire you, and there's nowhere to go, there is no work in the city, and I didn't want to live in poverty anymore, so I decided to try it ”(female, 47 years old, owner of a clothing store).

“When I was young I dreamt to open my own business, but then there were no opportunities... I got married, then my children were born, and everything was somehow forgotten. It wasn't good time. But then some of our friends, neighbors had started up their own businesses... I had made a decision too, and my family supported me” (female, 59 years old, owner of a flower shop).

The themes of independence and freedom were raised not only in connection with professional activities, but also as characteristics of everyday and family life. Among the advantages of running their own business, women stressed the ability to regulate the work schedule; managed income or expenses; made decisions about savings or large purchases.

“Now it's wonderful, it's up to me, I can go to the market or can't...” (female, 64 years old, pensioner).

“I have never had my own money... my husband gave me money for the household, when he was alive ... And when he died, I had to feed my family... by that time our factory had been already closed, I was fired ... Yea, starting up the business it was not from a good life, but after a while I even liked

it, money were appeared at least” (female, 52 years old, seamstress).

“When you are a waged worker, you have to take time off from work or ask for a permission, for example, to go to the doctor or go on holiday, but as a business-owner I can close the shop and go wherever I want” (female, 37 years old, owner of the clothes shop).

As a result, for the majority of respondents, the material motive is the leading one and is perceived as a source of income, which is typical not only for female entrepreneurs, but for most owners of their own business in Russia. This is due to the instability of the Russian economy, high unemployment and internal labor migration, low wages mainly in the “female” areas of professional activity: education, medicine, culture, and the service sector.

At the same time, a third of respondents stressed some disadvantages of running their own business, which include irregular working hours, sometimes lengthy business trips as well as a busy schedule due to gender stereotypes, that cause the reversal of male and female roles, family conflicts, and tense marital relations.

“When I started my business project, I was almost “living” in my working place from morning till night ... everything had to be monitored, everything had to be arranged, called, agreed ... Yes, my husband was not very happy with it. He tried to draw my attention to some home chores, he said that the floor was not washed and the dinner was not cooked, but, you know, I also tried not only for myself!” (female, 49 years old, owner of a sports club).

“At first, my husband said something like: “In a month you will quit your business”. He behaved like an observer ... he was just waiting, but didn’t help. When he saw, that the business was going on, he started to help... and now we are working together” (female, 35 years old, cheese-maker).

It is interesting to note that informants mention their children, mainly adolescents

and youths, as allies, who provided them with moral support or all possible assistance in the early stages of business development. This may be due to several reasons, for example, in order to increase their social status in peer groups, among friends and classmates; to receive additional cash to meet their own needs; to inherit the family business and gain confidence in the future. A quarter of the study participants announced the gradual inclusion of their spouses in the business, separation of duties while managing business.

Another motive for starting business was the possibility of helping children or grandchildren (tuition fees; paying off loans, mortgages) and needy relatives, which allows women to feel their usefulness and relevance; being included in economic and social life as well as increasing social and personal status. According to T. Burch, in developing countries, women entrepreneurs spend about 90% of their earnings on family and community needs, trying to develop and support women’s entrepreneurship networks (Burch, 2013).

“...we also help our grandchildren, our grandson is studying at university, we manage to pay the ‘fee” (female, 63 years old, pensioner).

“If you do everything wisely, so instead of working for the state or someone, it is better to work for yourself ...” (female, 46 years old, self-employed).

“The daughter and son-in-law took a mortgage to buy a bigger apartment, so money is necessary, but my pension is small, I couldn’t help them financially..., so I decided to grow vegetables and sell them... First of all, I was embarrassed how I would stand behind the counter, because I had been working as a nurse for thirty-five years in our local hospital, everyone knows me here... but then, I thought: “I myself have grown these vegetables, I haven’t stolen them, so why should I be shy...” (female, 66 years old, pensioner).

The data of our study are confirmed by the results of other scientists. According to

R.R. Galliamov, the leading motives of female entrepreneurship are the needs for self-fulfillment, independence, high social status and the desire to have high incomes (Gallyamov, 2016).

According to the results of the sixth wave of research conducted by the “Opora Rossii” Women’s Entrepreneurship Development Committee, together with “Otkritie” Bank, the Russian index of women’s entrepreneurial activity (WBI) was 69,4 (2018 – 69,4; 2017 – 69,2; 2016 – 56,8). The survey included three blocks of questions: the culture of entrepreneurship; assessment of economic conditions and infrastructure for business development/entrepreneurial ecosystem; and personal qualities necessary for the development of entrepreneurship. As a result, it was found that 92% of informants had a positive attitude to entrepreneurship; 66% declared their readiness to open their own business, of which 73% were women aged 25–34; 63% of women reported increased access to business education; 64% stressed the improvement of professional skills and positive dynamics in personal/family relationships (Index of women ..., 2019).

The main motives for women to start business were as follows: earning the additional income; the possibility of self-realization; independence from the employer; the possibility to leave business to children. The main factors inhibiting female entrepreneurship in Russia were the lack of financial opportunities – 88% and unstable economic situation in the country – 76% (Entrepreneurial Activity Index, 2018).

In the author’s poll, the main barriers to the development of women’s entrepreneurship in Russia were the lack of financial resources – 47,4%; fears, self-doubt, personal qualities – 15,8%; poor knowledge and experience in the field of doing business – 18,4%; unstable economic situation and underdeveloped infrastructure in the region, high level of competition and inflation – 18,4%.

“At first, I didn’t dare, but I look at a neighbor, she goes to the market every

weekend and I’ve decided to try... ‘At first, I was worried about everything, you know... For example, I had no idea what to do or what to say, how much it will cost, and so on... but after a while it was okey... life will teach everything...’ (female, 62 years old, pensioner).

“Everything is expensive now, in order to open up a business you have to have the money, if you don’t have your own, then you should take a loan, but if the business would not be successful? What will you do? To sell the apartment?” (female, 51 years old, self-employed).

The initial financial capital is an important element in decision-making process regarding the idea of opening up business. With a lack of financial resources, 57,9% of respondents took a bank loan; 31,6% borrowed money from relatives or friends; 7,9% attracted private investment and only 2,6% benefited from government subsidies.

Conclusion

In Russia, there are several reasons of professional discrimination against women: firstly, the underdeveloped market economy and unequal conditions due to strong professional segregation for women to start up and run business; secondly, poor representation of women in the areas of politics, business, and management; thirdly, congestion in the household; fourthly, the existence of gender stereotypes about the inferiority of women as leaders, businessmen and politicians; fifthly, the preservation and rooting in the mass consciousness of patriarchal ideas about the sole purpose of a woman as a wife and mother, which leads to the emergence of syndromes such as “double burden”, “glass ceiling” or “sticking to the floor”.

According to the results of the study, the main drivers of female entrepreneurship at the level of the constituent entity of the Russian Federation are material and professional incentives that can improve the quality of life and well-being, realize the opportunities for further professional growth and development, as well as gain additional skills. The

positive experience of entrepreneurs from the immediate social environment and the moral/material support of family members played a crucial role in deciding to start up business. There are some objective factors that hinder women's business careers such

as the lack of financial resources, experience and competencies for opening up business, poor education, socio-economic instability, underdeveloped infrastructure, as well as subjective ones, including low self-esteem, fears, and self-doubt.

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