

ANALYSIS OF THE START-UP MOTIVES OF FEMALE ENTREPRENEURS

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Abstract

This paper presents the results of the research of motives of female entrepreneurs for starting their entrepreneurial activity. The research is conducted on a sample of 40 female entrepreneurs from a number of cities in the Republic of Serbia. The results indicate that the motivation of the female entrepreneurs is a complex phenomenon that is made of a combination of the so-called negative (*push*) and positive (*pull*) motives for starting the entrepreneurial activity. Looking at the structure of the motives, the results suggest that female entrepreneurs are attracted to the entrepreneurship by the existence of business opportunities to a greater extent than they are pushed in this activity by an absence of other and better options of employment. These results should be interpreted in the context of the sample's educational structure, in which over a half of the respondents have higher levels of education. Regarding the key motives, it can be said that female entrepreneurs are a heterogeneous group, given the fact that the pull motives are more important for the population of more educated entrepreneurs, and that the *push* motives are more significant for starting the entrepreneurial activity among women with lower educational attainment. Similarly, although the *flexibility of working hours* is one of the most important motives for female entrepreneurs in general, its importance is most pronounced in the population of female entrepreneurs that are between 26 and 45 years old. The lack of the statistical significance of some results is explained by the sample size.

Key words: female entrepreneurial activity, *push* and *pull* motives.

АНАЛИЗА МОТИВА ПРЕДУЗЕТНИЦА ЗА ОТПОЧИЊАЊЕ ПРЕДУЗЕТНИЧКЕ АКТИВНОСТИ

Апстракт

У раду су представљени резултати истраживања мотива предузетница за отпочињање предузетничке активности које је спроведено на узорку од 40 предузетница са територије одређеног броја градова у Републици Србији. Резултати истраживања указују на то да је мотивација предузетница сложен феномен који чини комбинација тзв. негативних (*push*) и позитивних (*pull*) мотива за отпочињање предузетничке активности. Посматрајући структуру мотива, резултати упућују на закључак да су предузетнице у већој мери *привучене* у предузетништво посто-

јањем пословних шанси него што су у ову активност *гурнуте* непостојањем других/бољих могућности запошљавања. Овакве резултате треба тумачити у контексту образовне структуре предузетница из узорка у коме је преко половине испитаница са вишим/високим нивоом стручне спреме. Када су у питању кључни мотиви, може се истаћи да предузетнице представљају хетерогену групу будући да су мотиви из групе *pull* мотива израженији у популацији образованијих предузетница, док су мотиви из групе *push* значајнији за отпочињање предузетничке активности жена са нижим нивоом образовања. Такође, иако је мотив флексибилности радног времена један од најзначајнијих мотива предузетница уопште, његов значај је најизраженији у популацији предузетница старости од 26 до 45 година. Одсуство статистичке значајности појединих резултата објашњава се величином узорка.

Кључне речи: предузетничка активност жена, *push* и *pull* мотиви.

INTRODUCTION

Motivational basis for the selection of the entrepreneurial activity as an employment option is one of the first and one of the most studied aspects in the empirical studies of female entrepreneurial activity (Brush 1992; Carter, & Bennett 2006; Holmquist & Carter 2009). The research results suggest that a combination of various motives steer women toward choosing the self-employment option as their labour market status. All of those motives can be viewed as a part of one of the two main groups of motives – the group of the *push* and the group of the *pull* motives (Apergis, & Pekka-Economou 2010). The individuals who are predominantly motivated by the *push* or negative motives (Carree, & Verheul 2012) are those that are pushed into self-employment primarily by difficult working conditions in the existing workplace, unemployment, low family income and similar reasons. In contrast, those individuals who started their entrepreneurial activity attracted by a chance to earn more, to achieve a better social status and power, to realize their professional success and personal growth, a higher level of autonomy and independence are those who are primarily motivated by the *pull* or positive factors of entrepreneurial activity. In most cases, it is justified to talk about a combination of the motives from these two groups, with the predominance of one of them.

One of the characteristics of the female entrepreneurial activity is the fact that a significant part of it is so-called *necessity entrepreneurship*, that is – the existence of a significant number of female entrepreneurs who are *pushed* into the entrepreneurship (Bardasi, Sabarwal, & Terrell 2011; Brush 1992; Buttner 1993; Klapper, & Parker 2010; Loscocco, Robinson, Hall, & Allen 1991; Walker, & Webster 2006). The entrepreneurial activity of women motivated by these negative factors is particularly pronounced in the developing countries, as well as in the countries in transition (Carter, & Bennett 2006; Manolova, Carter, Manev, & Gyoshev 2007; Vossenbergh 2013). In contrast to the developed countries – where the largest number of

female entrepreneurs begin their entrepreneurial activity in order to exploit the recognized and profitable business opportunities, for the largest number of women in the developing countries, entrepreneurial activity is an option selected out of necessity. Therefore, the first hypothesis regarding the general motivational basis of the female entrepreneurs in the Republic of Serbia is proposed:

H1a: The entrepreneurial activities of women in the Republic of Serbia are initiated by a combination of the *push* and *pull* motives.

H1b: Within the structure of the motivational base of the female entrepreneurs in the Republic of Serbia, the significance of the *push* motives is greater.

Individual education is one of the key determinants of their choice of the employment status (Parker 2009). During the process of formal education, one can acquire the knowledge and the skills that are needed for a successful start of the entrepreneurial activity. The acquired analytical skills, ability to understand market trends, general and specific knowledge of certain areas can facilitate the identification and exploitation of business opportunities (Parker 2009; Verheul, Thurik, Grilo, & Zwan 2012). Within this framework, the third part of the first hypothesis is defined:

H1c: The *pull* motives are more pronounced among female entrepreneurs with higher levels of education, while the *push* motives are more pronounced among those with lower levels of education.

In most societies, women carry out the largest part of the household and family activities (Buttner, & Moore 1997; Müller, & Arum 2004). In such a position, they are often faced with the so-called *work-family conflict*, or to put it differently – they are in a situation that they cannot be equally successful in fulfilling the demands of their family and of their professional roles (Ufuk, & Ozgen 2001). Therefore, the empirical research of the women's motives to start an entrepreneurial activity often involves investigating the significance of the motives from the group of the so-called family variables (Devine 1994b). In that respect, it is emphasized that women's choice of the entrepreneurial activity is largely determined by the fact that this employment option provides greater flexibility of the work hours, which enables women to commit themselves to realizing household and family responsibilities (Carr 1996). In that way, women are *pushed* into self-employment by the ability to achieve greater autonomy in determining the length and schedule of their working time (Brush 1992; Thébaud 2010). Given the fact that the need for flexibility in order to balance family and business commitments is one of the key factor that determine the women's choice of self-employment (Brush 1992; Coughlin, & Thomas 2002), the expected importance of the motives related to work-family conflict is defined by the following hypothesis:

H2a: The flexibility of the work hours is one of the key motives of women for starting their entrepreneurial activity.

One of the factors from the group of the family variables that significantly increases the probability for women to select self-employment is the presence of small children – preschool children (Boden 1999a, 1999b; Carr 1996; Parker 2009; Wellington 2006). Caring for children of this age requires time, and therefore the flexibility of the work hours is a more pronounced motive for mothers of young children. Therefore, it seems reasonable to expect that the probability of having children is the highest for women that are between 26 and 45 years old. In accordance with the foregoing, the assumption regarding the relative importance of the flexibility of the work hours as a motive for the female entrepreneurs of different age is defined:

H2b: Compared to the other age groups, the flexibility of the work hours is a more important motive for women between 26 and 45 years old to start their entrepreneurial activity.

METHODOLOGY

Variables

Starting from the research goal and hypotheses, female entrepreneurs, that is female owners of small and medium sized enterprises and those registered as entrepreneurs according to the Law (National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia, 2011, arts. 2, 83), were defined as the research subjects. Regarding other variables implied by the hypotheses, education of the respondents was assessed based on the level of formal education that they have completed (without primary education; primary education; high school; college; Bachelor; Master; PhD). Four age groups were defined – up to 25 years, between 26 and 45 years old, between 46 and 65 years old, 66 years old and older. The analyzed set of motives for starting the entrepreneurial activity included: the desire for success and self-confirmation; to be your own boss; recognized business opportunities and the ability to exploit them; no possibilities for promotion in the sector of paid employment; starting entrepreneurial activity was the only option of employment; flexible work hours; the possibility to achieve higher earnings relative to the salary in the paid employment sector. The first three motives were labelled as the *pull* motives, while the remaining motives are considered to be the *push* motives for starting the entrepreneurial activities. Motivation was evaluated on a scale – the respondents were asked to rate the importance that a specific motive for starting the entrepreneurial activity had for them. The Five-point Likert scale was used for scaling (1 – completely insignificant; 2 – insignificant; 3 – neutral; 4 – important; 5 – particularly significant).

Data and Sample

Primary data were analyzed in order to empirically test the hypotheses. In accordance with the defined target population, the research subjects or sampling units were micro, small and medium sized enterprises and entrepreneurs registered with the Business Registers Agency of the Republic of Serbia. Survey units were female owners of these companies or female entrepreneurs from the territory of a number of cities in the Republic of Serbia. The sample of the female entrepreneurs was generated from several existing databases of female entrepreneurs¹. The questionnaire that was used for data gathering was distributed personally or by e-mail. From July to October 2014, 40 completed questionnaires were received. The variables were measured based on the responses to the closed-ended questions.

Statistical Methods

The statistical methods of descriptive and univariate statistics were used to empirically verify the defined expectations. Given the nature of the defined hypotheses, the value of the central tendency measures as well as mean differences tests (t-test with a sample, t-test and the paired samples t-test for independent samples) were used for drawing certain conclusions. Software package *SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science, Ver. 22)* was used as technical support.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows the importance scores for the *push* and *pull* motives. The differences between the mean scores for both groups of motives and the value of 3 were tested in order to verify the first part of the first hypothesis. Given the scale used to assess the importance of the motives (1 – completely insignificant; 2 – insignificant; 3 – neutral; 4 – important, 5 – particularly significant), the value of 3 was selected as a test value. Therefore, it is considered that the score of 3 is a threshold value. A score higher than 3 indicates that the rated motive is important for starting the entrepreneurial activity.

¹ Female Entrepreneurs Databases of: Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia; First Women's Club; Institute for Gender Equality of Province of Vojvodina; Association of Business Women *Nadežda Petrović*, Čačak; Association of Business Women, Subotica; Female Entrepreneurship Network *Fenomena*, Kraljevo; Centre for female entrepreneurship *Teodora*, Niš; several commercial banks' databases.

Table 1. The importance of the push and pull motives for starting the entrepreneurial activity by women

H1a	n	Mean	Standard Deviation	Test value = 3	
				t	Sig. (2-Sided)
<i>Push</i>	40	3.6500	0.72457	5.647	0.000
<i>Pull</i>	40	3.9418	0.80238	7.423	0.000

The mean importance scores for both groups of motives significantly differ from the test value (Table 1). Both of them are higher than 3. This confirms the hypothesis about the multidimensional motivation of women to start their entrepreneurial activity. As presumed, the women's motivations for starting the entrepreneurial activity are a complex combination of the *push* and *pull* motives.

The assumption about the dominance of the *push* motives was checked by testing the mean values of the importance scores for both groups of motives which are treated as paired samples. The results of the test are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. The difference in the importance of the push and pull motives for starting the entrepreneurial activity by women

H1b	n	Mean	Standard Deviation	t	Sig. (2-Sided)
Pair 1 <i>Push</i>	40	3.6500	0.72457	-2.073	0.045
<i>Pull</i>	40	3.9418	0.80238		

The results suggest that there is a significant difference in the mean value of the importance scores for the *push* and *pull* motives, though – this difference is not in the expected direction. Specifically, based on these results it can be concluded that the *pull* motives are more important for the female entrepreneurs from the analyzed sample. Accordingly, the second part of the first hypothesis cannot be accepted. Not like the results of certain previous studies conducted in the Republic of Serbia (see for example: Allen, Elam, Langowitz, & Dean 2008; Babović 2012; Stefanović, Ivanović-Đukić, & Lepojević 2015), and contrary to the expectations – the results indicate that female entrepreneurs in the Republic of Serbia are to a greater extent *pulled* into the entrepreneurship by the influence of the motives from the positive part of the spectrum – motives like: being your own boss, desire for success and self-confirmation and/or identified business opportunity and ability to exploit it. These results are similar to those indicating that necessity entrepreneurship is not that pronounced among women in the Republic of Serbia (Predić, & Stošić 2015). In this particular case, it is possible that the results about the relative significance of the observed groups of motives are a reflection of the educational background

of the sample. Unlike most self-employed women and men in the Republic of Serbia who have reached the level of high school education (Stefanović, & Stošić 2012), and unlike the majority of female entrepreneurs who, in the majority of cases, have a high school degree (Babović 2012) – more than a half (55%) of the sample units have a higher level of education, 10% of them have gained a master's degree and none of the respondents have less than a high school level of education. If the level of education increases the probability that the entrepreneurial activity is started in order to exploit certain profitable business opportunity – there is a possibility that the educational background of the sample causes the greater importance of the *pull* motives for women to start their entrepreneurial activity. This argument can be enhanced by the possibility that the women with a higher level of education are relatively less frequently faced with poor working conditions in the paid employment sector. Thus, the motives from the *push* group may be less important for them. However, the dominance of a certain group of motives among female entrepreneurs is a long way from clear. For example, the results of the research done in 2015 (Stefanović et al. 2015) show that a large number of women in the Republic of Serbia prefer paid employment relative to the self-employment option. Also, in addition to the independence in their work, the existential motives (solving the problem of unemployment, greater earnings) have a great significance due to which many women are *pushed* into entrepreneurship (ibid.).

The validity of the assumption that the *pull* motives for starting the entrepreneurial activity have a greater significance for women with higher educational level was tested by comparing the mean values of the *push* and *pull* motives' importance scores for a group of female entrepreneurs with a high school level of education and for a group of female entrepreneurs with a higher level of education (Table 3).

Table 3. The importance of the pull and push motives for starting the entrepreneurial activity for women with different level of education

	H1c	n	Mean	Standard Deviation	t	Sig. (2-Sided)
<i>pull</i>	<i>High school</i>	18	3.7778	0.90091	-1.146	0.260
	<i>Above high school</i>	22	4.0759	0.70478		
<i>push</i>	<i>High school</i>	18	3.7361	0.70956	0.675	0.504
	<i>Above high school</i>	22	3.5795	0.74557		

The results indicate that the mean importance score for the *pull* motives is higher in the group of female entrepreneurs with higher levels of education, while the mean importance score for the *push* motives is higher in the group of female entrepreneurs with a high school level of education. However, although both of these differences are in the direction that is defined by the hypothesis H1c, they were not statistically

significant. Accordingly, there is a reserve for accepting the hypothesis H1c.

The importance of the flexibility of work hours as a women's motive for starting their entrepreneurial activity is indicated by the fact that, according to its mean importance score, this motive is the second most important motive for starting the entrepreneurial activity by women, after the motive related to a recognized business opportunity and the ability to exploit it (Table 4).

Table 4. The importance of flexible work hours as a motive to start entrepreneurial activity by women

H2a	Motive	Mean score of importance			
	Recognized business opportunity and the ability to exploit it	4.075			
	Flexibility of working hours	3.925			
	To be your own boss	3.900			
	Desire for success and self-confirmation	3.850			
	Higher earnings relative to the salary in the paid employment sector	3.725			
	This was the only option for employment	3.700			
	No possibilities for promotion in the sector of paid employment	3.250			
		n	Mean	Standard Deviation	Test value = 3.775
					t Sig. (2-Sided)
	<i>Flexibility of working hours</i>	40	3.9250	1.20655	0.786 0.436

Moreover, the mean importance score for this motive is higher than the average importance score for all of the motives – 3.775 (Table 4). However, the difference in these mean values is not statistically significant, which limits the acceptance of the H2a hypothesis to only the sample, and not for the entire population of the female entrepreneurs in the Republic of Serbia.

That the flexibility of the work hours is relatively more important for the female entrepreneurs that are between 26 and 46 years old may be concluded on the basis of the mean importance score for this motive for the female entrepreneurs of different age (Table 5).

Compared to other age groups, the mean importance score for this motive is the largest for the female entrepreneurs that are between 26 and 45 years old. Also, the mean importance score for the flexibility of the work hours in this age group is higher than the average score for this motive at the sample level. However, like in the previous case, no statistically significant differences were identified.

Table 5. The importance of flexible work hours as a motive to start entrepreneurial activity for women of different age

H2b	Age group*		Mean score of importance		
	26-45		4.0435		
	46-65		3.7692		
	up to 25		3.7500		
	n	Mean	Standard Deviation	Test value = 3.9250	
				t	Sig. (2-Sided)
Flexibility of work hours (26-45)	23	4.0345	1.06508	0.533	0.599

*There were no entrepreneurs older than 66 years

Although when testing the hypotheses H1c, H2a and H2b there were no statistically significant differences in the mean importance scores for the motives, the results are in the direction that was hypothesised. This may lead to the conclusion that the expectations defined by these hypotheses cannot be completely ruled out. One possible reason for the obtained results can be the nature of the sample and its size. The *size reason* may be particularly important in the case of the empirical testing of the hypotheses H1c and H2b. Namely, for the purpose of the examination of the relative importance of certain motives in specific groups of female entrepreneurs, the total sample (n=40) was divided into smaller subsamples – depending on the size of the specific group of the female entrepreneurs. There is a possibility that these results would be statistically significant with increased sample size.

CONCLUSION

Women's motivation to start entrepreneurial activity is a multidimensional phenomenon determined by the interaction of the *push* and *pull* motives. The average importance scores for these motives for the female entrepreneurs in the Republic of Serbia are higher than the critical value. These results imply that the choice of the entrepreneurial activity as an employment option for women in the Republic of Serbia is determined by both the *push* and *pull* motives. Although the results of most of the analyzed studies indicate that one should expect the dominance of the *push* motives in the population of female entrepreneurs, the results presented in this paper do not suggest such a conclusion. On the contrary, although both groups of the motives are significant, the *pull* motives have statistically significant higher average scores of importance ($p=0.045$). These results suggest that the female entrepreneurs in the Republic of Serbia can be seen as opportunity rather than as necessity entrepreneurs. However, before making any firm conclusions – the educational background of the sample should be considered. An above average share of the entrepreneurs with higher levels of education and the absence of the entrepreneurs with the education level lower than the high school level are the characteristics of the sample which could

explain the results. Anyway, these results confirm the argument that female entrepreneurs are a heterogeneous group of economic actors whose motivation to start entrepreneurial activity is not unique. In that regard, the importance of the *pull* motives is greater for the female entrepreneurs with a higher level of education, while the flexibility of the work hours as a motive is of the utmost importance for the female entrepreneurs that are between 26 and 45 years old, that is, for entrepreneurs who are more likely to have children of preschool age. In general, the flexibility of the work hours is one of the most important motives for starting the entrepreneurial activity by women. This conclusion is indicated by the fact that the average importance score for this motive is the second largest on the list of all the analyzed motives, and that it is higher than the overall average score for all of the motives. The results regarding the significance of the flexibility motive, and those concerning the relative importance of the motives for certain groups of female entrepreneurs are not statistically significant (the sample size may be an explanation for this fact). Nevertheless, the direction of these results is consistent with the character of the defined hypotheses. Therefore, the sample size is one of the limitations of the study. Accordingly, the recommendations for future research refer to the need to increase the sample size and to structure the sample in a way to make it more representative of the educational profile of the female entrepreneurs in the Republic of Serbia.

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АНАЛИЗА МОТИВА ПРЕДУЗЕТНИЦА ЗА ОТПОЧИЊАЊЕ ПРЕДУЗЕТНИЧКЕ АКТИВНОСТИ

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Резиме

Истраживања предузетничке активности жена указују на то да су мотиви жена за избор овог статуса на тржишту рада различити, те да се сви они начелно могу сврстати у групу push, односно у групу pull мотива за отпочињање предузетничке активности. Жене за које предузетничка активност представља одговор на лошу позицију на тржишту рада, као и оне које предузетничку активност бирају како би успеле у испуњавању захтева своје двојке – породичне и пословне улоге јесу предузетнице које су "гурнуте" у предузетништво. С друге стране, предузетнице које предузетничку активност започињу како би првенствено искористиле уочену пословну шансу, као и оне које у овој опцији виде могућност да остваре самопотврђивање и лични развој јесу оне које су у предузетништво "увучене" деловањем pull, односно позитивних мотива. Пратећи овако конципиран оквир категоризације мотива за отпочињање предузетничке активности, резултати истраживања спроведеног на узорку од 40 предузетница из Републике Србије указују на то да су у структури мотива предузетница заступљени мотиви из обе посматране групе. Ипак, супротно очекивањима, није потврђена претпоставка да су предузетнице у Републици Србији у већој мери "гурнуте" у предузетништво значајнијим деловањем мотива из групе push мотива. Овакви резултати се могу тумачити као ефекат образовне структуре предузетница из анализираних узорка. Бројчана доминација предузетница са високим/високим нивоом образовања може бити разлог због ког је значај pull мотива за отпочињање предузетничке активности израженији. Испитивање релативног значаја ових мотива за различите групе предузетница указује на то да су pull мотиви заиста значајнији за групу предузетница које имају више од средњег нивоа образовања, док су push мотиви израженији покретач предузетница са средњим нивоом образовања. Имајући у виду чињеницу да је већина жена суочена са тзв. породица-посао конфликтом тестирана је валидност хипотезе о значају флексибилности радног времена као мотива за отпочињање предузетничке активности жена. Добијени резултати указују на то да је према свом значају овај мотив у самом врху мотива предузетница, као и то да је од највећег релативног значаја за предузетнице старости 26-45 година. Иако утврђене разлике у појединим случајевима не показују статистичку значајност (за шта се узрок препознаје у мањој величини узорка), ове разлике у значају појединих мотива јесу у претпостављеном смеру што охрабрује делимично прихватање дефинисаних хипотеза, као и наставак истраживања у дефинисаном смеру.