

FACTORS OF PROFESSIONAL SUCCESS FOR SELF-EMPLOYED WOMEN

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Abstract:

Numerous publications about female entrepreneurship present concepts of professional success and a variety of factors enabling or determining the achievement of professional success by woman. The authors list those specific psychological characteristics, skills and behaviours. The challenge for any woman can be an environment, and the factors on which she has no considerable impact. Such internal and environmental factors that may become the determinants of entrepreneurship will be presented here based on literature review. Scientists who study female entrepreneurship indicate numerous factors which have an influence on women's professional success. These are:

- skills specific for women,
- specific characteristics,
- social conditions: cultural and environmental.

The aim of this article is to determine the most important factors which help women to achieve professional success. To accomplish those aims, the following research questions were formulated:

1. Which skills are needed to achieve a women's professional success?
2. Do certain universal characteristics exist which facilitate the achievement of women's professional success?
3. Which cultural and environmental conditions determine entrepreneurial behaviors in women which ensure professional success?

Polish literature on the subject and results of research about women's professional activity which were published in the years 2009-2012 were utilized for the article.

Keywords: factors of professional success, entrepreneurship of women, psychological determinants of women's professional success, socio-cultural determinants of women's professional success, women's skills

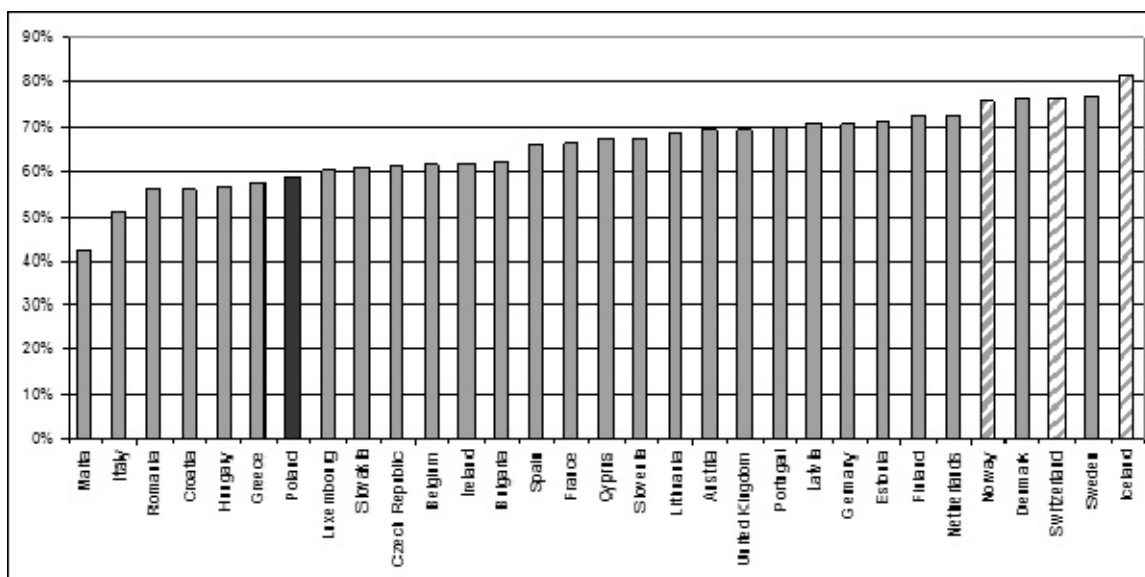
INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship is viewed as a fourth production factor, next to land, labour and capital (Night F. H., 1925). Everything that is out of any framework of acting, which needs to be creative, open - minded and has a sign of risk is considered a case of entrepreneurship. It is often understood as taking a fight for success, too. For Peter Drucker “entrepreneurship is about taking risk” (Drucker, 1970). Self-employment, according to the Polish law, is “gainful production, constructional, commercial, service activity and search, identification and extract minerals from deposits. It is also professional activity, performed in an organized and constant way” (The Freedom of Economic Activity Act of July 2, 2004).

Results of research, which was made by GEM (Global Entrepreneurship Monitor) in 2011 in 59 countries, show that 187mln women run their own business. 104 mln of them are women who have just opened their businesses (GEM, 2010). Women’s professional activity level is lower than that of men. It is caused by many reasons. The main one is that in many families a man still remains a principal or the only bread-winner. On the other hand, women stay at home and take care of the household and children (Kurowska & Dworzniak & Franczak, 2011, pp. 8-9).

The research shows that professional activity in Poland in 2010 was at the level of 65% of all population. 59% was the rate of professional activity of Polish women. It puts our country in 7th place from the end on the list of all EU countries. In 2009 self-employed women accounted for only 35% of all women on the labor market. Today it is still far from striking the balance between man and women on the labor market, but the situation has been changing (Kurowska & Dworzniak & Franczak, 2011, pp.11-14).

Picture 1: Professional activity of women in 31 European countries in 2010



Source: Kurowska & Dworzniak & Franczak P., (2011), Favourable law of woman’s entrepreneurship in Poland. Recommendations of changes. Warsaw, PARP, In Eurostat Database: Labour Force Survey Statistics.

Nowadays, women can fight effectively for their position on the labor market. They demand more jobs for themselves. Their activity could help them combine a motherhood period with their return to professional careers without any harm. In 1997 another research was conducted. It presented some forecast for the labour market in 2020. Results were quite astonishing. The research showed future as a labor market dominated by woman. It forecast that flexibility would be a characteristic factor of the workplace in the future. People on which the survey was made were convinced that women worked faster than man. Their distinguishing characteristic was that they could stay focused on a couple of things at the same time. They still maintained accuracy and established friendly relations between their co-workers and other people. It is worth asking a question if women, can establish and run their own businesses and achieve professional success in that area due to their specific characteristics?

1. CULTURAL CONDITIONS OF WOMEN'S PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

In the last few years the situation on the labor market with regard to sex equality have changed for the better. More and more women began to enter the labor market and more often they began to perform executive functions in many walks of life. In the opinion of specialists, some characteristics of women have become a critical factor in gaining an advantage over men in those positions. An increasing number of women on the labor market and their rising engagement in career, however, may have a negative impact on their family life. AS a result, women bear fewer and fewer children and, if they finally decide on maternity, it usually happens at some later moment in their lives. After that they return to work. The decreasing size of families (the so-called nuclear families) and the high mechanization of the household chores have made women spend less time on them, and enabled them to devote their spare time to pursuing professional careers (Knapik, 2008, p. 43).

But women have not always had that opportunity for personal development and professional success. In past centuries woman were deprived of basic human rights, for example the right to learn, work, vote or dispose of a family property. Her duty was to take care of family and home. She was never let enter any other sphere of social life. Changes in that rigid structure didn't begin to come about until after the First and Second World Wars. Men would leave their women and go to the front. Women had to take men's positions in many areas which, so far, had been inaccessible to them. It included their work positions, which were already vacated (Strykowska, 1992, pp. 35-37). The fact that woman entered new areas of social life, did not mean that they resigned from previous duties. Quite the opposite, their advantage became an extremely appreciated ability of maintaining the balance between professional and family life. Their conceptual and organizational skills began to be appreciated, which had an impact on their professional position. Women started to be promoted and the tasks which were given to them had that specific characteristics of woman. They had to, both once and now, demonstrate much more engagement and put much more effort into their work than men to be appreciated. Until now, much more is required of women than of man in the same position. It is the main reason why we should take the equality of rights and human rights subjects.

The degree of discrimination which women usually have to face, depends on many factors. They can be, for example environmental factors, as the rules which are applied in an organization. The discrimination of women happens more often in organizations which have not any promotional or assessment standards. Employees are perceived there only in terms of sex differences which is reflected in a career path and income level. It is possible to identify some stereotypes, which result from the conviction that women and men have different predispositions while carrying out identical tasks. It shall be deemed that women are characterized by much more preciseness or precision. Men possess leading and strategic skills (Kosak, 2010, pp.467-474). For a long time there was a prevailing view that a situation when a woman stays at home and performs her basic role of a mother and a housewife is the best for all society. That stereotype is already not valid any longer. "Now, it is the professional work that offers an opportunity for a woman to take a full and active part in social life" (Jedynak, 1990, p. 282).

2. PROFESSIONAL SUCCESS, VALUES AND ASPIRATIONS IN LITERATURE ON THE SUBJECT

According to Tiedeman and Miller- the Tiedeman model, success is the long-term employment and superiors' positive assessment. Satisfaction in a specified satisfaction degree, which is brought to an individual by work. Success is often defined as achievements, prosperity in such a situation, triumph, in accordance with intentions ended by an undertaking (Kupczyk, 2009, p. 95). It is a conviction that we will achieve our aims, prosperity, get to place we want to be in (Sikorski, 2007, p.11). Professional success is also understood as "a perception and acceptance process of our professional activity" (Kupczyk, 2009, p. 96). In that case success is achieved through objective and subjective conditions, which have to be done if individuals would like to talk about themselves as people of success (Bartkowiak, 2004, p. 43). Success phenomenon can also be defined as the process of undertaking constant activity on "the highest degree of individual abilities in order to meet their own wishes and keep a universal moral code and balance between all spheres of social life" (Majewska- Opielka, 1996, p. 48).

The first attempt at defining success phenomenon was already in antiquity. According to Aristotle

success means achieving happiness. For any human being happiness and also success are such different things. Because of that, to define precisely the above-mentioned terms, it is necessary to define the notions of values and aspirations. These two factors have a big impact on what people chose in life. According to Kluckhohn, *values* are imagination of what we desire, “imagination which has an impact on selection from possible ways, remedies and aims of acting” (Kluckhohn, 1962, p. 389). Values are all those things and conditions, which people want to achieve. Everyone has some values, which are more or less important for him and that is the reason why it is possible to line up them in some hierarchical structure. A human being, through making a choice between more important values and those, which are less important for him, he manages his own life. But the real challenge is to keep the same values throughout the whole life. All empirical experience and environmental pressure, in which a human functions, have a strong impact on that established hierarchy. Consequences are such that values undergo changes. It is an unavoidable phenomenon because of human mentality, who still tries to always achieve new aims and because of the surrounding world, which is still changing and brings about progress.

In an entrepreneurial woman's opinion, success means achieving a definite professional or financial position. But it is also to satisfy internal needs which are connected mainly with self- realisation and doing something which can be useful for other people. An entrepreneurial Pole thinks also that a professional success is mainly about striking a balance between family and professional life. This answer was chosen by 55% of all women. For 54% interviewed women it is an opportunity of self- realisation at work. Women, who took part in that research, claimed earlier that they perceived themselves as people who had already reached some success in life. It is possible to conclude on the results of the research that more than half of women in Poland are those of success. In spite of the existing stereotypes, they can balance family life and career. Women perfectly deal with these two aspects of life without any side effects¹.

Women also understand success as: (1) satisfaction from performing duties, (2) taking care of their work position of what they like the most, (3) training and development, (4) starting to do activity, which will make organization and women develop, (5) self- realisation, (6) financial satisfaction, (7) balance in all spheres of life, (8) activity discretion, (9) sense of doing useful things (Kupczyk, 2009, p. 96).

3. ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT STARTING AND RUNNING THEIR OWN BUSINESS BY WOMEN

Available literature presents two groups of factors, which have an impact on women entrepreneurship. These are push factors, which force them into entrepreneurial activity. It can be, for example, the awareness of responsibility for their families and a will of earning more money. The other group of factors are pull factors. That group appeals mainly to young, well educated women who, through running their own business want to reach success, prestige and acknowledgment in their environment (Balcerzak- Paradowska, 2011, pp.25-29).

Persuasive factors which induce women to start their own business despite fear and uncertainly are similar as those for men. A will to develop yourself when the occasion arises, no possibilities for finding a job, a will to be independent in making decisions and the possibility of training and self-development. According to research carried out on women by PARP (Polish Agency for Enterprise Development), additional persuasive factors were as follows: a will to take responsibility for their own life, facilities connected with flexible working hours, which is helpful in balancing family and professional life and the realization of their dreams about running their own business.

It is also possible to group entrepreneurship determinants in general national framework conditions and entrepreneurial framework conditions. In first group there are such factors as openness of economy, tendency of growth, stability of money or effective markets activities. In entrepreneurial framework conditions it is possible to find such elements as approach to capital, public policy, public entrepreneurship support programmes, education and trainings, research and development, commercial and professional infrastructure, market openness, lifting barriers, access to technical infrastructure, cultural and social norms (Balcerzak- Paradowska, 2011, pp.25- 29).

1. <http://www.pwnet.pl/?s=publikacje;menedzerka>

There is also a different classification of entrepreneurship factors. The first type is technical development. Women less frequently than man run their own business in a modern line of business. The second categories are economic factors. In that group it is possible to find such elements as the GDP, unemployment and growth of services sector share. The third group are cultural determinants. According to the author, entrepreneurial activities are shaped by values and believes (Balcerzak-Paradowska, 2011, pp.25-29).

Literature and results of research show that there are factors, which make it easier to reach professional success. It is possible to divide them into internal and external factors. Internal factors, which are the most often mentioned, are: (1) knowledge, (2) skills, (3) psychological characteristics, (4) identified acts. External factors are: (1) help from the European Union, (2) support from government and self- government institutions and media, which conduct activities whose aim is to make those issues known, (3) demographic situation, (4) changes, which have taken place in the economic and management areas. Suitable degree of specific knowledge, skills and identified psychological characteristics are typical of women. Those help entrepreneurship women to reach professional success (Kupczyk, 2009, pp. 52-61).

4. OCCURRENCE ENTREPRENEURIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF WOMAN

It is possible to distinguish specific characteristics of an entrepreneurial person. It can be, for example: (1) achievement motivation, (2) taking the risk, (3) tolerance of uncertainty (Stoner & Freeman & Gilbert, 1997, pp. 21-43). An entrepreneurial person is also open to new ideas and organizational changes. She is ready to continue learning and take an initiative. She is flexible, ingenious and innovative. She has a cognitive control over the situation, always aiming at championship and she has an attitude towards reaching success supported by will power. An entrepreneur leaves successfully implemented ideas bravely and searches for new solutions in order to meet clients' needs (Schumpeter, 1960, pp. 99-102). She is independent and has an optimistic attitude to life. She can accept the defeat and can deal with it. She leads her team with pleasure (Sudol, 2006, pp.20-26). According to Schumpeter entrepreneurs are "individuals who exploit market opportunity through technical and/or organizational innovation" (Schumpeter, 1960, pp. 99-102).

Characteristics which are typical of woman are, for example: significant potential, much bigger than that in men, creativity, profitability and innovation and a stronger bond with the company which she works in. Women are bosses intuitively, they are more sensitive and emotional compared with men. Via experiences initiated by taking care of children and home, women are better at solving conflicts in the workplace. They have the ability to gather and convert a big amount of data and on the basis of that data, make a decision. They can perceive problems from different points of view to find solutions to them. Women build long-term plans perfectly and they deal with difficult situations more effectively. They can foresee consequences of their choices and always have some other solution up their sleeves (Kupczyk, 2009, pp. 57-59).

An exceptional quality of women's character is the ability to share their experiences with their co-workers. Furthermore, more often than man they use a democratic management style. It is manifested mainly through participation and by giving equal opportunities to all employees. That style, so as the activity of women, is also revealed through partnership, compromise situation, negotiations, focusing on peoples' good, attitude towards important things and effective activity. Women are more communicative and have much more developed interpersonal abilities. They have emotional intelligence and teamwork skills (Kupczyk, 2009, pp.52-61).

5. CONCLUSION

Characteristics, which are typical of both women and entrepreneurs are, for example: innovativeness, flexibility, inventiveness, determination to achieve success. Furthermore, women manifest many characteristics which give them the basis for entrepreneurial development. In knowledge-based economy, any organization is built by humans. If this organization is managed by a person who is involved in connecting people, negotiations in critical situations and, in addition, they can think strategically and make a right decision in stressful situations, the organization will undoubtedly achieve success. You can find those characteristics in women, so they are perfectly predisposed to run their own business.

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