



Importance of Female Entrepreneurship

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Abstract: Behind the most significant problems of the world – poverty and starvation, wars, environmental pollution and climatic change, there are goals characteristic of patriarchal society: the extension of power, the acquisition of resources even using violence. One of the main tools of acquiring economic and political advantages is to maintain the subjection of women. Due to their biology, they are exposed to harassment and violence in times of peace and war alike. Their core necessity is their own security and the safety of their children, in order to achieve that, they endeavour to develop a behaviour, an appearance, a life path, a way of life supported by the patriarchate – especially if they have no pecuniary room for maneuver. The investment of women with economic power, their entrepreneurship activity strengthen their autonomy and influence in the personal and economic scope, moreover, even taken in the political sense, and, at the same time, the prevailing of values that go beyond the patriarchal set of values: the welfare of children, the elderly, the sick and other persons exposed, preserving environment and safety. Goal of the paper is to raise awareness as to the importance of female entrepreneurship, the impediments lying ahead of their progress, to set forth the conditions of their development.

Keywords: female entrepreneurship, women entrepreneurs', economic independence, women in political decision making

1 Background

1.1 Personal motivations

For sixteen years now, I have been dealing with providing support for women restarting their career, with creating equal opportunities for women on the labour market, with promoting their economic independence. My endeavour is to assist spreading the application of gender-based approach as an advisor at individual levels, at an organisational level while elaborating workplace programs that support women, and as a gender expert by making proposals of specialised policy at global social level.

It is my conviction that solving the most significant problems of the world – poverty and starvation caused by the distribution of resources and earnings, the wars, pollution of the environment [1], the change of climate, etc. – is inconceivable without questioning and changing the patriarchal order of society, the hierarchy of the genders.

1.2 Questioning the global patriarchy

The millenary distribution of tasks between genders, constitutes the foundation of patriarchal society, based on continuous growth, the extension of power, acquisition of resources often by violence. In our era, one of the main challenges of global market economy is that women's mostly unpaid work secures the sustainability of reproduction activities, thus, the subordinated social role of women is an essential interest of global patriarchy, as its absence would jeopardize the operability of present societies [2].

In the globalising economy, societies disposing of a different culture in terms of gender equality, strive, on the one hand, to meet more or less the minimum of human rights recorded in the basic documents of international organisations, however, on the other hand, they deem it their inalienable right to determine where the place of women is, to restrict or incite maternity, the taking up of employment, to facilitate or aggravate studies, divorce, entertainment, the autonomy and rights of women. Merging women's situation with the families' situation – which, for instance in Hungary, is very deep-rooted in public thinking – successfully diverts attention from the balance of power within the family, the utilisation of earnings, the domestic distribution of tasks, access to leisure [3].

We should recognize that women are one of the most important tools and victims of sustaining patriarchal society [4], to a larger extent compared to men at the identical levels of social hierarchies. Although women are naturally present at the highest levels of social and economic hierarchies, their power and security are secured by men, and men-managed structures, also by their identifying with the patriarchal set of values. Their appreciation, moreover, in certain societies, their existence is straightforward based on their biological adequacy (their ability to bear children, their beauty), or the free performance of caregiver activities deducted from the biological role. Due to their gender roles prescribed along their biological utility, they are exposed to harassment, violence in peace and war alike [5].

Besides, gender status multiplies other disadvantages – health, ethnic disadvantages or those stemming from being a member of another group with disadvantaged position – e.g. from the aspect of lodging, access to the core infrastructure or health services, exposure to violence and discrimination [6].

The substantial part of their work-performance is unpaid, by means of the caregiver activities and domestic chores, they take care of the children, the elderly,

the sick, of reproducing the ability of men to earn money, to exercise power. Due to that, they are subsequently met by discrimination in the world of labour too: there are less women disposing of labour-based income, they work in materially less recognized sectors, activity scopes, throughout life, their earnings and pension are behind those of the men, their own assets accumulated represent a very meagre proportion. Women perform 2/3 of jobs in the world, for overall 10% of the earnings and own 1% of assets [7].

The power structures of patriarchal system – politics, the churches, police-state organizations, and recently the media – did and do a lot – unequivocally or almost imperceptibly – with the goal to make women wish to comply or to enforce it. Although women taking care of the children are interested in peace and welfare in every part of the world – at the same time women themselves maintain the men's power.

The collective and transmitted trauma of physical, sexual, economic, psychological and verbal violence to which women are exposed, well-known to generations, compels women to accept the patriarchal set of rules, the supremacy of men, to apply specific techniques of battling – in many cases in return simply for their own and their children's physical and financial security [8].

Thus, security is the basic need of women, and with a view to achieve it, they generally endeavour to develop a behaviour, look, life path, way of life, family model supported by the patriarchate – especially if they have no pecuniary room of their own for manoeuvre, for choices corresponding to their own ideas, needs, desires.

1.3 The importance of women's economic independence

A core condition to women's security is to cease their dependence and helplessness, whose key factor is to invest women with power: at individual level, to support the creation of their autonomy and economic independence, and on the social level, to promote their equal access to political, social power and to the power enabling the forming of opinion.

I would subsequently like to talk of the female entrepreneurship activity, which provides women with earnings obtained in their own right, at the same time, confirms their ability to independently prosper, reduces their insecurity with regard to the ability of taking care of their children, hence encourages other women as well to strive to assume their autonomy in personal, economic, even political sense, to make independent decisions, to stand up for themselves and their environment.

Namely, I am convinced whereby, compared with work-performance as employees, based on adjustment to the patriarchal set of values and organisational hierarchies, it is a higher proportion of women becoming entrepreneurs, the

strengthening of their enterprises that can strengthen the women's proportionate participation in the decision-making of societies.

The economic independence of female entrepreneurs, the deploying of their self-assertion skills, their assuming responsibility for themselves, their own sort will allow for an ever-increasing number of women to recognize their own skills, strength, to acquire economic independence, and to represent for society the values that go beyond the patriarchal set of values: the welfare of children and other helpless persons, caregiving, preserving the environment and security.

For women, one of the principal traps of patriarchal society is the message whereby women's security is created by men, whilst in our era, the main source of jeopardy, the source of global problems is precisely the subsistence of the patriarchal set of values based on women's subordination.

The key element of social, economic and environmental sustainability is to extend the women's personal autonomy, their rights, to strengthen their ventures.

My lecture is based on my recently concluded research, revealing the particularities of female ventures, and the position of domestic female ventures.

My aim is to cast light on the aspects, reasons and nature of inequalities between genders that are characteristic of the business sector. Namely, without revealing and following up the inequalities, without commitment to their termination in principle and also manifesting it in actions, without carrying out interventions at system-level, it is impossible to create social justice between women and men.

2 Inequalities between genders in the business sector

2.1 Female life strategies in the entrepreneurial activity

The extension of female roles, occurred in the last century, did not bring along the transformation of male roles: the distribution of domestic roles is still determined by the model of male breadwinner. The necessity or need to earn money is still a secondary social expectation in the case of women.

However, due to the female life cycle and roles different from the male ones, compliance with the family obligations is especially emphatic for women in certain life phases, which adversely affects their paid work-performance, their chances to acquire earnings. The female life strategies offered by society belong essentially to three well-separable groups in terms of participating in the world of labour:

- dependent existence: performing the domestic tasks, lasting absence from the labour market

- combination strategy: restricted presence on the labour market, subordinated to the obligations of private life
- career strategy: its goal is durable presence on the labour market, exploiting the skills, earnings acquired on one's own right [10].

Part of the women not taking up a paid job actively contribute to the development of their husband's/partner's venture, they subordinate their personal development, livelihood to the breadwinner activity of the head of the family. Their environment, but even often they too view themselves as the helper of their husband/partner, eventually even if they hold formally also an ownership stake in their husband's firm, based on which they could acquire earnings in their own right. Pecuniary exposure considerably increases the chance of economic and other violence against women in the couples. An eventual breaking up of the couple – despite the rights enforceable during divorce – significantly jeopardizes pecuniary security, as the enterprise can be essentially linked to the man's activity.

Those thinking in terms of the combination strategy can equally opt for a joint venture in partnership with their husband/partner, yet, they strive less to stay in the background, having their personal contribution recognized by their partner and the outside world as well. Entrepreneurship as a complementary activity can be another form of the combination strategy.

A substantial part of female ventures is a single-person enterprise, which could also mean that the growth of venture, the upward-swinging career equally rank among the personal goals. At the same time, for the majority of these female entrepreneurs, an aspect determining daily operation and one of the main barriers to their growth is the endeavour to find a balance between family and work, just like in the case of women's workplace promotion [11].

Female entrepreneurs setting themselves the career strategy – although private life is by all means no less important for them either, moreover, they even strive to reconcile work and private life – do not restrict the development of their enterprise: if necessary, they do several hours of workplace overtime, hire an employee, eventually they undertake even absence, travel, etc.

3 Gender-based stereotypes determining the entrepreneurial activity of women

The business sector is essentially dominated by men to this day, the role model of entrepreneurs is conceived as male by the majority of society to this day. Namely, education that stresses and supports the different qualities, skills of boys and girls, and training that prepares for the traditional gender roles, do not strengthen the qualities necessary to launch a venture – willingness to assume a risk,

independence, self-confidence – in the case of girls, or less than in the case of boys. According to socialization and the stereotypical views confirmed by the media, women are – as they say - „emotional beings”, it is almost like advancing that venture is not a field for women, since women:

- are not tough enough for business,
- are incapable of making rational decisions,
- are impressionable, therefore unsuitable for an executive role, to manage people.
- couple, private life are more important to them, thus, they are not sufficiently reliable, etc.

Women interiorize the gender-based stereotypes, they determine their choice of career, career ideas, expectations of earnings, requirements for financial independence at a lower level compared with men, subordinated to family life. Their self-assessment is largely influenced by the social expectations attached to female roles, physical look, the existence of couple, the fact of childbirth, the clever running of household, compliance with the scope of caregiver task [12.]

Inequalities

Among inequalities existing in the world of labour, the highest-level inequalities can precisely be observed in the world of enterprises. There is a lower proportion of female entrepreneurs [13].

- The entrepreneurial activity of women is often of auxiliary nature, they often carry it out in their homes, often under informal conditions,
- Besides their mobility in terms of space, female entrepreneurs devote less working hours to the enterprise, reconciling work and family life means difficulty for them.
- Female enterprises mostly appear in feminine activities (horizontal segregation).
- Female ventures are mostly single-person ventures (vertical segregation).
- Female entrepreneurs are missing from the decision-making that serves the development of ventures, from the representation of entrepreneurial interests, they do not participate in the business networks dominated by men.
- Women have lower earnings from entrepreneurial activity than the earnings of enterprises owned by men.

The capital supply of female ventures is by far lower than the enterprises led by men, already from the start-up:

- they have a more restricted share capital at their disposal, due to their earnings, inferior to those of men, they dispose of lower savings,
- they are less independent than men in decision-making on the use of family savings for a venture goal, also, within couples, men are less supportive in connection with the venture activity of women than the other way round,
- they involve investors to a lower proportion,
- their willingness to assume risks is lower, therefore they take up fewer borrowings to launch the venture.

The growth of female enterprises is of lower extent too than that of men-managed ventures, due to similar reasons:

- they devote their accumulated earnings rather for goals related to family life,
- female entrepreneurs are less growth-oriented, since the primary goal of women – in the longer run by all means – is to create a balance between work and family,
- female entrepreneurs strive less to involve the contributors, as they endeavour less to become executives, to assume the additional burdens the employer tasks involve,
- very few of them take up borrowing, involve investors.
- the ability to reconcile venture activities with the female/family roles is an important criterion of success [14].

During their entrepreneurial activity, female entrepreneurs face numerous forms of discrimination. However, considering that women themselves also embrace the gender-based stereotypes, they are less sensitive to being directly or indirectly exposed to disadvantageous discrimination as women. In connection with this, legal awareness is of a low level, it is hard for them to recognize the various forms of discrimination. Female entrepreneurs operating in a business environment dominated by men have related several situations which illustrate well the prejudices against women, the sexist belittling of women which can be described as general, the very widespread harassment, which, although those concerned perceive mostly as unpleasant due to their own stereotypical views, at the same time, they do not recognize at all whereby they have received unequal treatment, or have encountered adverse discrimination [15].

4 The importance of solving inequalities

The role and influence of female entrepreneurship both increase in regions of the world with the most different economic opportunities and social traditions, a multitude of governments, international organisations, and prominent participants of the business world welcome the business networks of female entrepreneurs [16]. It is an increasingly acknowledged and recognized fact whereby enterprises led by women can, could substantially contribute to growth, to the development of human environment, to social mobility and integration, to general welfare, therefore, the development of female ventures is a highlighted priority for the most notable organisations, prominent in the field of developing international economy, like the ILO working alongside the UNO, the World Bank and the USAID too [17].

Besides, a number of other transnational organisations, states, multinational companies also emphasize in their strategic documents and communication the importance of enforcing the aspect of gender equality, hence the aspect of women's and girl babies' security appears in the UN endeavours aimed at maintaining peace. Despite the unequivocal positions taken, for the time being, the majority of states, international institutions still apply mostly obsolete models, public policies.

4.1 A proposed model for solving inequalities

The gender-sensitive approach in public policies – gender mainstreaming – creates the genuine opportunity to increase the role of female ventures, to understand their disadvantages and to eliminate the barriers in front of them. This requires simultaneous interventions

- consistent manifestations in order to proclaim the values, to eliminate the prejudices, shaping the approach positively;
- by means of deeds, actions – e.g. prizes, competitions, sponsorship programs -, with systematic initiatives aimed at women;
- moreover, in certain countries, also at a strategic level, female executives and female ventures are equally supported by programs of macro economy and public policy.

Genuine changes are achievable in the field of eliminating the social and economic inequalities between the genders if every concerned participant simultaneously appears at all three levels.

As I am convinced whereby welfare and security interpreted at the individual and broader levels can be realised exclusively by integrating the objective of gender equality, by re-thinking the patriarchal values, by strengthening the women, by

promoting their economic independence, by extending their undertaking of social role.

With I wish to provide assistance with the following model (depicted in the table below) for the next years to plan the action and follow it up.

What is/can (could) be done for gender equality	by the State (macro-level)	by the world of labour (micro-level)	by the individual (man and woman)
in the field of rethinking the values, eliminating the prejudices, stereotypes			
at the level of deeds, actions, practices			
in the scope of influencing public policies and strategies			

Table 1
Model of solving gender inequalities

Conclusions

I think that the elimination of hierarchical intergender relations would result in essential changes, with regard to determining the priorities of society, creating an opportunity for global processes of the world to take a different direction. However, the increasing economic power of women is indispensable to create and maintain genuine influence, to change the patriarchal set of values which rushes the world into danger. Detailed elaboration of the above-presented model would mean a systematic action plan aimed to put an end to the economic- and power inequalities between the genders, my subsequent researches will focus on that.

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