

Designing the Future of Romanian Women Entrepreneurship: Fight and Flight

Delia Mioara Popescu

Valahia University, Romania

Ionica Oncioiu

Titu Maiorescu University, Romania

Anca Gabriela Petrescu

Valahia University, Romania

Marius Petrescu

Valahia University, Romania

INTRODUCTION

According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the contribution of women in entrepreneurial activities is not well known mainly due to the lack of valid and reliable data about male-female variable in entrepreneurship. In order to develop effective policies for improving equality between men and women in entrepreneurship it is necessary to collect detailed data which could be compared at an international scale (OECD, 2005).

The relatively recent interest of women for business has been observed by other specialists who have found through the studies they conducted the following fact the increase in the number of women entrepreneurs in industrial countries is recent. Before 1970 women entrepreneurs were rare. Since then, their growth has been remarkable (Coughlin & Thomas, 2002; Hallam & Zanella, 2017).

In what concerns the evolution of women entrepreneurs in the European Union, Parker (2004) mentions the fact that the percentage of self-employed in this region varies considerably from about 20% in the UK, Ireland and Sweden to 40% in Belgium and Portugal. Following the purpose of an overview on female entrepreneurship in Romania, and implicitly on females interested in creating and developing a business, a presentation of certain issues is required, such as the country's total population, the number of females, the number of women entrepreneurs (Dorobat & Topan, 2015; Gundry & Ben-Yoseph, 1998).

Regarding the number of females interested in owning their own business, developing and achieving its performance it can be said that in Romania there are over 500,000 women entrepreneurs, representing 34% of the shareholders or domestic companies (Pocol & Moldovan-Teseliu, 2014).

BACKGROUND

The literature presents numerous definitions, features and typologies of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs, and the study of entrepreneurship, in general, and of women entrepreneurship, in particular, is one of the reasons that have determined a whole series of researchers to allocate time and energy to better know this domain, to uncover new information, and to go deeper into the older knowledge (Afrin, 1999; Goby & Erogul, 2011; Kerr, 2017; Raghuram & Hardill, 1998; Savoiu, 2014).

According to some researchers (Fitz-Koch et al., 2017; Hallam et al., 2016; Landig, 2011; Marlow & Wynarczyk, 2010), women still form the most underrepresented group in entrepreneurship, and among the reasons why the number of women entrepreneurs has been reduced over time includes: social and cultural influences, education and options related to career, but also the lack of self-confidence, perceptions regarding the traditional place of women, family responsibilities, motivation and attitudes of women regarding risk. After starting the business, a number of factors such as: the lack of/the limited access to human capital and financial barriers related to network information and access to care, and also the concern regarding women oscillation between family and career have influenced women's involvement in entrepreneurship (Farmer et al., 2011; McGowan et al., 2012; Ruderman et al., 2002).

A study conducted by the Centre for Entrepreneurship and Business Research – CEBR (Driga & Lafuente Gonzáles, 2009), on female entrepreneurship in Romania that had 626 participants of which 378 (60%) men and 248 (40%) women revealed that in Romania, the male entrepreneurship prevails (the number of men involved in entrepreneurial activities exceeding that of women in all geographic regions of the country). The research also reveals that the proportion of potential women entrepreneurs exceeds that of men, that means that more women than men are involved in the actual start of a business in all regions except Western areas (Arad, Caras- Severin, Hunedoara and Timis), and in the South (Arges, Calarasi, Dâmbovița, Giurgiu, Prahova, Virginia), where the number of potential men entrepreneurs, outnumber the women. For the group of new entrepreneurs (entrepreneurs who have started a business in the past two years), the situation is as follows: the percentage of men entrepreneurs exceeds that of women entrepreneurs in the capital, the North-West (Bihor, Bistrita-Nasaud, Cluj, Maramures, Satu Mare and Salaj), the North- East of the country and in the South, and the women entrepreneurs exceeds the proportion of men entrepreneurs in central Romania (Alba, Brasov, Covasna, Harghita, Mures and Sibiu), in the West, the South-East and the South-West (Dolj, Gorj, Mehedinti, Valcea and Oltenia).

Regarding age, it can be said that in what concerns entrepreneurs, be they prospective or active, women have a slightly more advanced age than men. Thus, women who are potential entrepreneurs have an average age of nearly 42, while men in this group have a mean age of 41.

Regarding work experience, it can be said that women have on average more work experience than men. Thus, previous work experience, on average, is three years longer for potential women entrepreneurs, compared to their male counterparts (15 years versus 12 years for men), and women entrepreneurs who have started a business in the last two years have, on average, an extra year of work experience than men (10 years for women and 9 years for male entrepreneurs).

Among the motivations of women entrepreneurs in Romania we can mention: the desire to be their own boss, the desire to have their own business, finding business opportunities, the desire to improve quality of life, the desire to make a contribution to society, the desire for social status, the desire to make money, the motivation to pay less taxes, the desire to not be unemployed, the desire to follow the family tradition, the admiration for other entrepreneurs.

Regarding the profile of successful women entrepreneurs in our country, some authors (Baughn et al., 2006; Dima et al., 2011; Zellweger et al., 2012) claim that in Romania, the general idea is that a

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