

Motivational Drivers of Women Entrepreneurs

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Abstract— In our study, we analyze the entrepreneurial motivations of women entrepreneurs, with particular emphasis on the internal drivers that go beyond traditional financial objectives. Women entrepreneurs make a significant contribution to economic variety, as they often operate in sectors that differ from those dominated by men. Our research focused on the factors that encourage women to start their own businesses, and on the role played by self-fulfillment, flexible working hours, and the desire to achieve work–life balance.

Applying a quantitative method, we conducted a questionnaire survey in March 2025, which respondents completed online voluntarily and anonymously. A total of 76 active women entrepreneurs filled in the questionnaire. The main hypothesis of our investigation was that self-fulfillment and freedom in time management play a key role in the motivation of women entrepreneurs. Our results show that women entrepreneurs often choose business activities that align with their personal values and life situations, while also providing opportunities to express their creativity.

Our research contributes to a deeper understanding of entrepreneurial types among women and highlights that the motivations of women entrepreneurs are diverse, unique, and often closely intertwined with their personal circumstances and social roles.

Keywords — *entrepreneurial leadership, women entrepreneurs, motivation, self-fulfillment, human resources, human resource management, flexibility*

I. INTRODUCTION

Women are becoming increasingly confident and intentional in starting their own businesses; however, their motivations, challenges, and driving forces often differ from those of men — shaped by their social roles, family responsibilities, and personal goals. This research focuses on examining the entrepreneurial motivations of women, with the aim of exploring the internal and external factors that encourage them to start a business.

The study centers around the following key questions:

- What motivates women to start their own businesses?
- How do these motivations differ across life stages (young entrepreneurs, mothers, older women)?
- How important is flexible working time, and how is it implemented in practice?

The relevance of the topic is underlined by the fact that supporting female entrepreneurship has become a strategic objective both in the European Union and in Hungary. Yet, practical experience shows that women still face more difficulties in accessing information, funding opportunities, or entrepreneurial networks. At the same time, an increasing number of studies emphasize the importance of family background: a supportive environment has a positive impact on entrepreneurial confidence and sustainable operation, while a conflictual family situation can be a hindering factor [1].

This research not only presents the motivations and types of female entrepreneurs but also aims to inspire those who are currently considering starting their own business. Because women — regardless of their life situation — create value.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Sectoral Distribution of Women-Owned Businesses

Between 2018 and 2022, the proportion of women starting new businesses in Hungary exceeded the EU average. While the female entrepreneurship rate in the European Union stood at 6%, in Hungary it reached 8%, indicating a growing entrepreneurial spirit among women [2].

On a global scale, women entrepreneurs are most active in the *trade sector*, where their presence reaches 48.6%, compared to 40.1% among men. This sector therefore plays a key role in the expansion of women-led enterprises. The second most significant area is the *public, health, education, and social sectors*, where women represent 17.6%, while men account for 10.9%, reflecting women's increasing engagement in socially oriented fields.

Other important sectors include *financial, professional, and administrative services*, where female entrepreneurs make up 16.4%. In contrast, women's presence in *manufacturing and transportation* stands at 10.8%, and in the *information technology (IT) sector* it is only 2.3%, compared to 5.3% among men. The latter clearly indicates that there is still significant potential for encouraging female entrepreneurship in the IT field [3].

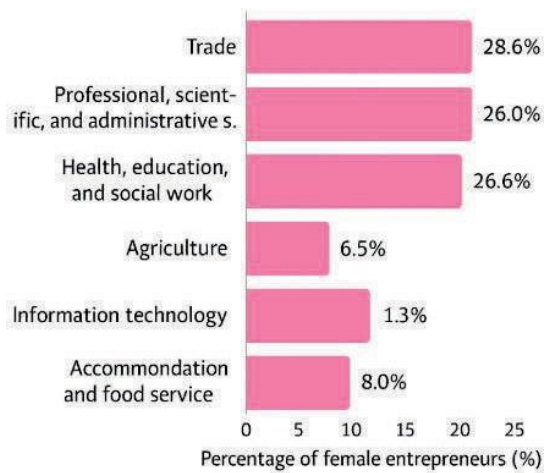


Fig. 1.: Sectoral Distribution of Female Entrepreneurs in Hungary

(Source: compiled by the author based on [3])

Fig.

B. The Dynamics of Female Entrepreneurial Motivation and Life-Cycle Characteristics

Identifying types of female entrepreneurs is essential for gaining a deeper understanding of their needs, motivations, and the challenges they face. Such insights make it possible to design more targeted support mechanisms, customized tools, and relevant resources that foster the sustainable growth of their businesses. Typology is also crucial because women start their ventures for diverse reasons, pursue different strategies to achieve their goals, and operate in varying economic and social contexts.

There are several theoretical approaches to classifying entrepreneurial motivations. Goffee and Scase categorized female entrepreneurs based on their relationship to traditional gender roles and their entrepreneurial value systems [4]. Moore distinguished between traditional and modern entrepreneurial types [5], while Langan-Fox and Roth approached the topic from a psychological perspective, identifying three main types: achievement-oriented, pragmatic, and managerial [6]. Mitra classified entrepreneurs into four groups based on motivational factors: young achievers, constraint-driven entrepreneurs, family-oriented entrepreneurs, and income-driven entrepreneurs [7].

These typologies highlight the multifaceted nature of women's entrepreneurial motivations, reflecting individual life situations, social norms, and access to economic opportunities. The study of entrepreneurial motivation is a central theme in economic and social research, as it fundamentally shapes the creation, operation, and long-term development of businesses.

In the case of female entrepreneurs, motivations often differ from those of men, closely linked to their attitudes toward social roles, family responsibilities, and the challenge of achieving work–life balance [8].

Based on the literature, entrepreneurial motivations can be analyzed along two primary dimensions:

- **Internal motivations**, such as the desire for independence, creativity, self-fulfillment, and value-driven activity;

- **External motivations**, such as labor market constraints, inflexible working environments, or the need for income generation.

In addition, motivations can also be classified as:

- **Pull factors** (e.g., professional development, flexibility, gaining social status), and

- **Push factors** (e.g., unemployment, job dissatisfaction, discrimination). ([9], [3])

Research consistently shows that among female entrepreneurs, internal, value-based motivations — such as self-fulfillment, autonomy, and social contribution — are often more influential than purely financial goals. For many women, entrepreneurship is not merely an economic activity, but a means of achieving personal growth, creative self-expression, and balance between family and professional roles. This perspective is particularly important in establishing work–life balance, which is often a top priority for female entrepreneurs.

It is essential to emphasize that women's entrepreneurial motivations are not static, but change dynamically depending on individual life situations, social roles, and life-cycle stages. The literature identifies several age- and life-stage-related types:

- *Young, independent entrepreneurs* are primarily motivated by the desire for autonomy, financial independence, and professional development [10]. Members of this group are often active in innovative, technology-oriented, or creative industries.

- *“Mompreneurs”*, i.e. mothers with young children, are typically driven by the need for flexibility and work–family balance. They often choose business models closely connected to motherhood, child-rearing, or family life, allowing them to work from home ([11], [12]).

- *Older women entrepreneurs* frequently start their ventures as a “second career”, utilizing their previous professional experience. Their motivations are dominated by the desire to remain active, contribute to society, and achieve self-fulfillment [13]. They are often engaged in consulting, mentoring, or nonprofit activities.

This life-cycle-based approach highlights that women's entrepreneurial motivations are not only diverse but also evolve over time, closely tied to the trajectory of their personal and professional lives. Understanding these motivations is therefore essential for designing targeted entrepreneurship development programs, support systems, and policy interventions.

C. Motivational Tools for Supporting Female Entrepreneurs

Maintaining entrepreneurial motivation throughout the entire business life cycle is of critical importance especially for female entrepreneurs, who often operate in complex roles across family, social, and professional dimensions. The following motivational tools offer practical support for women in entrepreneurship, helping sustain resilience and long-term commitment.

1. Personal Vision and Value-Based Mission

A personal vision and set of core values, such as helping others, creating social value, or achieving self-fulfillment, serve as powerful internal motivators. Clearly articulated goals and a mission statement help maintain focus, particularly in the early stages of entrepreneurship, when financial and emotional uncertainties are more pronounced [14]. Businesses that align with personal values are more sustainable and motivating in the long run.

2. Goal Setting and Strategic Planning

Regular goal setting and strategic planning are essential for sustaining motivation. Specific, measurable, and time-bound objectives, for example, using the SMART goal-setting method, enable entrepreneurs to track progress and navigate challenges effectively. Structuring goals in this way enhances the sense of self-efficacy, which directly supports sustained motivation.

3. Women's Entrepreneurial Communities and Networks

Belonging to women's entrepreneurial communities and being exposed to female role models and inspiring stories have a significant motivational impact. Supportive environments build confidence, reduce feelings of isolation, and create opportunities for experience-sharing, problem-solving, and business development. Through both online and offline networking, women entrepreneurs gain not only professional support but also emotional reinforcement an essential factor in overcoming entrepreneurial challenges [15].

4. Continuous Self-Development and Learning

Commitment to personal and professional growth is another strong motivational driver. Continuous learning, through courses, workshops, online programs, or professional literature, allows female entrepreneurs to stay up to date with market trends, enhance their competencies, and identify new opportunities. Self-development increases not only business success but also personal satisfaction and confidence.

5. Mentorship and Business Coaching

Mentorship is a structured learning process in which experienced entrepreneurs provide guidance, feedback, and direction to less experienced ones. For mentees, this process offers not only professional growth but also emotional support, particularly in times of stagnation or uncertainty. Mentors can serve as role models and help strengthen entrepreneurial identity. For women, mentorship and supportive networks are of outstanding importance, as they sustain long-term motivation and foster the development of entrepreneurial competencies [16].

III. EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

The aim of this research was to explore the motivational factors influencing women's decisions to start their own businesses. The study employed a quantitative methodological approach, using an online questionnaire for data collection. A total of 76 female entrepreneurs participated, representing various life situations, economic sectors, and business types. The questionnaire contained both closed and semi-open questions focusing on entrepreneurial motivations, professional background, and the balance between work and private life.

A. Results

Based on industry distribution, the largest proportion of respondents were active in the handicraft sector (22.4%), followed by the beauty industry (14.5%), marketing and consulting (both 10.5%), and trade (9.2%). The remaining 31.9% were distributed across sectors such as healthcare, education, information technology, financial services, hospitality and tourism, agriculture, manufacturing, sports, real estate, interpreting, construction, and security services. This industrial diversity clearly reflects the broad economic engagement of female entrepreneurs.

In terms of age distribution, most respondents were between 26 and 45 years old, indicating that the main target group consists of women in the active, career-building phase of life. Specifically, 9.2% were aged 18–25, 38.2% were 26–35, 31.6% were 36–45, 11.8% were 46–55, and 9.2% were over 55.

When analyzing motivational factors, flexible working hours emerged as the most influential driver, cited by 76.3% of respondents as their primary motivation. This was followed by financial independence (63.2%) and professional self-fulfillment (59.2%). Additionally, social value creation and community contribution played a significant role, especially among mothers with young children, for whom entrepreneurship often serves as a means to reconcile family life with professional ambitions.

These findings confirm previous literature suggesting that women's entrepreneurial motivations are complex, shaped not only by economic but also by social and personal factors.

B. Motivational Factors by Life Situation

The results show that women's entrepreneurial motivations are closely linked to their individual life circumstances and life-cycle stages. The following patterns emerged among respondents:

- *Young entrepreneurs* were primarily motivated by the desire for independence and career development. For this group, entrepreneurship serves as a means of self-realization and financial autonomy.
- *Among mothers with young children*, the most significant motivational factors were flexible working hours and family-friendly work organization. According to their responses, entrepreneurship enables them to harmonize motherhood with professional aspirations — consistent with international research on the “momprenneur” phenomenon ([11], [12]).
- *Older entrepreneurs* were mainly motivated by the opportunity to utilize prior knowledge and experience and to pursue a “second career.” For them, entrepreneurship often represents a way to remain active in later life and contribute to society through meaningful work.

The survey also highlighted that motivational factors are not static, but evolve dynamically over the entrepreneurial life cycle. In the early stages, *flexible work and livelihood needs* are typically the dominant drivers, while in later phases, *professional fulfillment, self-realization, long-term stability, and social value creation* gain importance.

These findings are consistent with international research trends, which indicate that women's motivational patterns differ from those of men ([8], [14]). While men often prioritize financial success and business growth, women tend to place greater emphasis on *flexibility, value-based operation, and a family-oriented mindset*.

According to the survey, *flexible working hours* are highly significant for both mothers and women without children. Of the 76 respondents, 54 had children and 22 did not. The results show that although flexibility is particularly important among mothers, non-parent female entrepreneurs exhibited similar patterns. This suggests that flexibility is not solely a response to family obligations but a general need among women entrepreneurs, serving as a key element of work–life balance.

Self-fulfillment also emerged as a powerful motivational factor. The vast majority of respondents, regardless of parental status, stated that their business provides an opportunity to pursue personal and professional development. This supports the view that the drive for self-realization is not merely an individual ambition but a shared

value-driven force shaping women's approach to entrepreneurship.

The evolution of these motivations over time aligns with the findings of the GEM 2023 global report [1], which notes that women-led businesses are increasingly adopting models focused on long-term sustainability and social value creation.

In conclusion, the research confirms that female entrepreneurial motivations follow distinct patterns, and recognizing these is crucial for developing the entrepreneurial ecosystem and designing targeted support programs. Strengthening the role of *flexibility, community support, and mentorship* is particularly important to enhance the long-term success and resilience of women entrepreneurs.

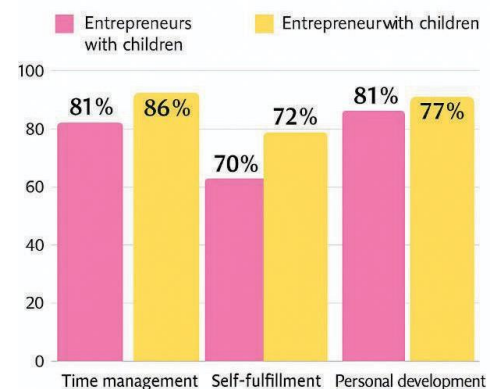


Fig. 2. Motivational Factors among Women with and without Children

(Source: compiled by the author based on research data)

Based on the responses, entrepreneurship represents far more than financial security for most women, it also plays a crucial role in personal growth and the strengthening of self-confidence. Both women with and without children predominantly agreed that their business significantly contributes to their independence and the development of their professional identity. This indicates that entrepreneurship serves as an identity-forming factor for women, fostering the unfolding of internal resources and long-term satisfaction.

The motivational patterns of mothers and non-mothers show many similarities. Flexibility in time management, the opportunity for self-fulfillment, and the desire for personal development appear as shared driving forces that stem not only from life circumstances but also from the fundamental motivations of women's entrepreneurship.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of the research clearly indicate that female entrepreneurial motivations are highly diverse and are closely linked to individual life situations and the different stages of the entrepreneurial journey. The most frequently cited motivational factors include flexible time management, financial independence, and professional self-fulfillment, although their relative importance varies depending on age, family background, and previous experience.

Among young entrepreneurs, the dominant motivations are independence and career building, while for mothers with young children, flexibility and family-friendly business operation are of paramount importance. In contrast, among the older generation, motivations focus on utilizing previous knowledge and experience and the opportunity to pursue a second career.

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that women's entrepreneurship should not be viewed merely as an economic activity, but as a value-based decision, one that places identity formation, personal development, and social engagement at its core. Therefore, entrepreneurship development programs should place greater emphasis on elements that promote flexible work arrangements, community and mentoring networks, and the strengthening of entrepreneurial self-confidence among women.

The role of mentorship and role models is particularly significant, as they provide not only professional guidance but also emotional support, fostering success at the start-up stage, perseverance, and long-term growth.

Overall, the research confirms that supporting female entrepreneurship holds both economic and social importance. By developing appropriate incentives and targeted support structures, female entrepreneurs can contribute even more effectively to sustainable, inclusive, and innovative economic development.

In recent decades, the economic and social participation of women entrepreneurs has become increasingly prominent. However, their motivations, decision-making mechanisms, and entrepreneurial patterns remain underrepresented in entrepreneurship research. Women's entrepreneurship should thus be understood not merely as an economic pursuit, but as a complex, value-driven decision, shaped by self-fulfillment, flexibility, social contribution, and personal life circumstances.

The present study aimed to identify the motivational factors influencing women's decisions to start a business, and to explore how these motivations evolve with age, family background, and entrepreneurial experience.

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