

BEING MOMMY,EARNING MONEY. ABOUT TRANSYLVANIAN MOMPREENEURS THROUGH A QUALITATIVE APPROACH

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Abstract: Mompreneurship can be viewed as a reaction to neoliberal and neoconservative ideals and policies, which are making harder for women to work outside the home. Among these, we can mention the lack of affordable quality childcare or the difficulty to find flexible employment. In this context, mompreneurship appears as a good option for women who do not want to choose between family and work. By becoming a mompreneur, one becomes able to fulfil in a better way these conservative roles, and still participating in the paid labour force. This means that their hard won education and degrees were not in vain, and even if in small scale, they contribute to the family income.

The mompreneurs started to receive a great deal of civil and academic attention in the last couple of years. In this paper we want to analyse – with the help of 12 in-depth interviews, taken during 2017-2018 – the motivation of those mompreneurs, who were starting their business during their maternity leave or at the beginning of their reintegration to the labor-market after several years of maternity leave. Our target group are the mompreneurs from Covasna and Harghita county who started their business in the last 2-5 years and have small children under age 7.

Keywords: mompreneur, female entrepreneur, motherhood, gender roles, maternity leave

1. Introduction

For nearly two decades, an increasingly important social role attributed to entrepreneurs and businesses has been increasingly emphasized in academia, economics and even in the political sphere, with the regional and regional economic role. International research shows that female entrepreneurs play an increasingly important role in these processes (Maxfield 2005). The emergence of female entrepreneurs would not only be beneficial but also economic-social (Ashwin 2000). Welter-Kolb 2006: 8), as female entrepreneurs appearing among entrepreneurs may be the forerunners of a complex innovation practice that can generate significant changes (Gergely, 2013) .

Regarding the number and volume of business sector, Romania and, in particular Covasna and Harghita counties are in a very specific position: the region without a big city and large industry is one of Romania's lowest income earners, although there are not a small number of small enterprises registered but the number of medium and large enterprises is small. The appearance of female players among entrepreneurs is almost exclusively among micro and small business owners (Gergely 2013). Emmelle is associated with an emphatically traditional mentality, for example in terms of gender roles, complemented by the legacy of socialist emancipation and a two-family family model (Bodó 1996). Strong urbanization and socialist modernization also influenced gender roles: women's roles were significantly expanded (Magyari-Vincze 2004, Geambasu 2004). Soviet socio-ethical norms have enlisted a paradoxical situation for women: apart from the introduction of Soviet gender equality (such as similar rights to education and work), neither the former functions

(household, family, children's education) have abolished anything (Ashwin 2000) which resulted in a double or multiple burden on women (Ashwin 200, Welter-Kolb 2006, Magyari-Vincze 2004). These burdens have fallen shortly after 1989, and have been enriched by a number of societal challenges in the past decade: today, every mother must be environmentally aware, no bio-herbicide, if she can, she can only cook healthy food for her child, she must also adapt to the maze of modern medicine, and of course you have to take care of your child much better than 2 decades ago, since nobody can raise a key child today (Anderson - Moore 2014).

In this context, it is even more a question of how and how women respond to individual and community expectations in today's society, what job market strategies prove to be successful, who are those who want to start a business, and how they can and want to reconcile it with their roles in women and maternity. That is why we believe it is important to focus on women in the group of entrepreneurs who have started their business in recent years and are raising small children to run the business.

2. Entrepreneurship and motherhood

Although interest in the name and topic has grown over the past fifteen to two decades (Anderson-Moore, 2014), it is not a completely new phenomenon for any business (Richomme-Huet et al., 2013). Over the past few years, more and more people have started to deal with women entrepreneurs who are mothers and entrepreneurs at the same time as entrepreneurs and business research researchers. Career transitions and career changes, as well as entrepreneurs and women's participation in the labor market, have become more and more interested in mompreneurs (Casteleijn-Osorno 2014).

Naturally, the term was "delivered" by two women: Patricia Cobe and Ellen Parlapiano, who "tagged themselves" and "women" like them in the name of their web site for women in the 1990's. They were mothers and entrepreneurs who worked from home and raised both children. They started a web site, www.mompreneuronline.com, lectured and started writing books for women who are also entrepreneurs or start-ups (Richomme-Huet et al., 2013: 253). By the end of 2011, Collins English Dictionary also added the term mompreneur to its titles. This term is also used in Hungarian, and we introduce the terms of the subcontractor or the parent.

Mompreneurs have added a new dimension to maternity (Nel et al 2010, id. Rochomme - Vial, 2014: 19) in order to better coordinate their two important roles, maternal and entrepreneurial roles. In addition, there are more places to meet in the literature that the most important goal is not entrepreneurship and profiteering, but a new, different kind of opportunity and work that allows the former diaphoric variable: working to educate children not to choose (Nel et al., 2010).

The following table shows the definitions used by the first who were writing about the topic

Table 1. Who are they? Definitions from academic literature

Mumpreneur

mother	„a mother who combines running a business enterprise with looking after her children”	Collins English Dictionary (2011)
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children	“a woman who had at least one child at the time of business start up and who is the owner of at least 50% of a business”	Jean and Forbes (2011)
multiple demands	“an individual who discovers and exploits new business opportunities within a social and geographical context that seeks to integrate the demands of motherhood and business-ownership”	Ekinsmyth (2011)
balance	“female business owners actively balancing the roles of mother and entrepreneur”	Korsgaard (2007)
	“who balance family and starting and managing a business”	Ho et al. (2010)
	“women entrepreneurs (...) who set up a business in order to enable them to both work and care for young children. (...)”	Duberley and Carrigan (2012)
new ventures	“a woman who move from traditional employment to owning and operating new ventures, either to better fit with their role as mothers, or motivated by opportunities identified by the experience of pregnancy or having children”	Harris et al. (2008)
identity	“not (...) a quirky label or play on words but (...) an emerging identity with specific attributes within the enterprise discourse”	Lewis (2010)

Mompreneurship

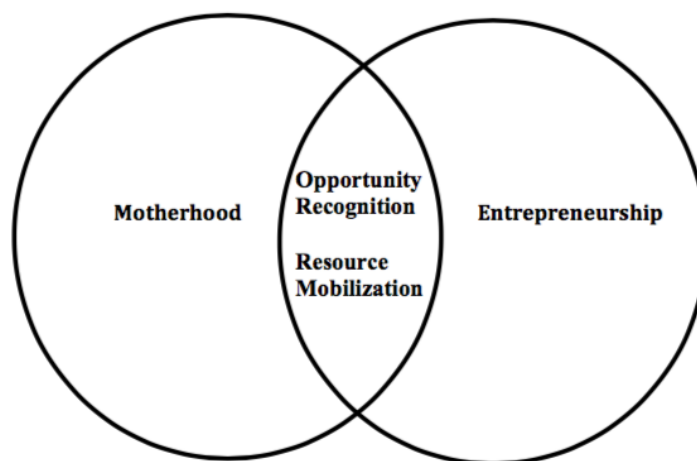
To achieve the work-life harmony	a “form of entrepreneurship driven largely by the desire to achieve ‘work-life harmony’ through an identity orientation that blurs the boundary between the roles of ‘mother’ and ‘businesswoman’”	Ekinsmyth (2011)
	“a new emerging trend that takes on the concept of entrepreneurship into family businesses” [and] “it is a part of female entrepreneurship”	Nel et al. (2010)
	“an emergent phenomenon, which has yet to settle on a widely accepted definition or be researched from a social scientific point of view”	Korsgaard (2007)

Source: Richomme-Huet et al. 2013: 255, Casteleijn-Osorno 2014: 12.

(Hudson-Breen 2014: 2), and in the case of young women and girls (Hudson-Breen 2014: 2), and in many European ways, there is much more to be done on research that focuses on entrepreneurs (Jean 2010).

According to Durah, maternity and family changes bring a series of new situations and information to the mother, and this information can lead to new business opportunities and mobilize new resources (Durah 2016: 24). And if they arise, then the business idea is formulated. For example, a mother with lactose and gluten sensitivity to her baby will miss out on a range of recipes, such as cookies, for home use for her baby. Then you see that there is an increasing demand for this, and you are starting to make others and then start a business. Another entrepreneur starts to use washable diapers for sensitive, disposable plastic diapers for her allergic skin, and develops a washable diapering company.

Graph 1. Entrepreneurship and motherhood



Source: Durah 2016: 24.

The interest in becoming an entrepreneur can be attributed to unrealistic social expectations, which are women's dual commitment: they want to be successful in their profession, but they want to be good mothers in the same time. Some of the popularity of any business venture may also be related to the values of neoliberalism. They can be interpreted in response to neo-liberal and neoconservative ideas and social policies that make it difficult for women to work outside the home. It is difficult to assure high quality care for children under the age of three, to provide flexible working hours for unpredictable problems, or to maintain employment opportunities for a longer child-care leave. Mompreneurs are able to meet the conservative role requirements while continuing to participate in some form on the labor market, so their qualifications acquired over a long period of time do not go to waste and to some extent contribute to family income. As such, mompreneurs are the perfect combination of adult woman and caring mother (Wilton 2017). The mother-in-law appears to be an ideal mother model, which suggests a fine criticism of women's social expectations: they are "neoconservative" to be good mothers and have an impact on the regional and macro economy too (Moore 2010, Wilton 2017: 198). Complex social expectations therefore make a big contribution to the growing number of women being fit for a growing number of women - that is, a kind of response from mothers to increasingly complex social expectations (Jean-Forbes 2012: 115, Gergely 2018).

According to the specific literature, we must also say that being a mompreneur is a kind of privilege that not every mother can choose. Research shows that in many cases, 20% of family income was provided by the mompreneur, which shows on one hand that the main purpose of mompreneurship cannot be the big income, but on the other hand that this is not an open option and a viable path for everybody. Those women can choose this whose family

has a stable financial status and who has an individual freedom (Jean-Forbes 2012: 115, Gergely 2018).

The term *momprenneur* is and can be used for several type of mother and situation. From the freelancer mothers to those female entrepreneurs who have children there are different types of mompreneurs (Jean- Forbes 2012: 115, Wilton 2017: 197). We will present four types of mompreneurs, but in our analysis we will use only one of these.

I. **Freelancers**. In some analyzes, the term mompreneur is used also for freelancers: those mothers, who are working from home or from a home-office. In our analysis we did not intend to include the freelancers, since the freelancer-phenomenon is not quite typical for the region, yet, as it is a new type of work model, only a few people are working like this and especially in big cities.

II. **Mothers for mothers**. There are many businesses that offer products or services to mothers, especially for mothers with small children. The (female) owner of such firm whose target group are the mothers, also can be labeled as mompreneur. Even if in our region there are small firms like this, but small in number, so we did not focus on this type of mompreneurs.

III. **Entrepreneurs and mothers**. Those female entrepreneur who have child, children. According to the our previous research results, three-quarters of the female entrepreneurs in our region could be entered in this category (Gergely 2013a: 69, Gergely 2013b: 147). Since this would be a bit larger group, we thought that the focus should be on a smaller subgroup.

IV. **Start-uppers** – or beginners as mothers and business women as well. Those female entrepreneurs, who started their business during or after the maternity leave before or in the first year of returning to the labor market after couple of years of child raising. We have decided that this is our target group for this analysis.

4. Methodology

The data source of our analysis is provided by twelve interviews. The interviews were made with entrepreneurs living in Covasna and Harghita counties during 2017 and 2018. We interviewed women who have at least one child under the age of seven and have started their business over the past two to five years during or after child-raising leave. Each respondent woman has a higher education degree, the youngest subject is 30 years old and the oldest is 42 years of age. 8 of them live in a city, have one, two or three children, at least one of them, but in one case all three under 7. All of them are well-known and acknowledged in their own community and have been selected on the basis of the recommendations.

Based on the data of the interview, we look for answers to what was the most important motivation factor for starting a business, what difficulties they have, how they see their present activity compared to their previous work, how well they see a good business decision, how to solve family and child raising issues business.

Our analysis pursues only a first approach to a phenomenon, it can not provide a complete overall picture, and since it is a new methodological and semantic topic and area, this is only an introductory first step towards knowing the topic.

5. Findings

"I left a job that I really loved and it was perfect for me. Before the birth of my children "

The data provided by the in-depth interviews revealed that during the first child's arrival, and during maternity leave, women change significantly (Duran 2016). For others, this change is so significant that it is no longer very difficult to imagine the earlier life and working routine, the return to their previous job after 1 or 2 years. The women's motivation, priorities, dreams, plans are changing significantly during maternity leave and. All of the women are speaking about their need and their desire to have time for the children and family without big difficulties. Almost all of them have reported that it is almost impossible to maintain this in an employee relationship in the long run.

5.1 What is needed to take the chance?

Starting a firm is a result of a very long decision process for women. Many of them speak about a long „trial period” during which they start to offer services, products in half-illegal way, cheaper or sometimes even for free, until they register their firm and practically carry on their activities. Which factors prove to be decisive in starting a business and decide not to return to their former workplace after the end of the maternity leave. It seems that **money** is definitely an important determinant: the women need to see that they can earn with this activity at least the same sum of money as their earlier salary. If they find that they can do that, they will be more determined to become a mompreneur.

Previous workplace and **work experience** are also decisive in the decision making. Those who have too many negative experiences regarding the boss-subordinate relationship, are more afraid to go back in such constellation.

Length of child-raising leave. In many families, children are born in short intervals, so there is no break in childcare leave, so there is no return to the workplace, so the distance from the workplace can be 3-4 or even five. Based on the interviews, it appears that the longer the GYES was, the easier it was to start a business.

5.2 "I wanted to do something else than before. Very different! "

Based on the interviews, it seems that we cannot really call self-employed entrepreneurs as forced entrepreneurs. Nonetheless, some negative factors can be identified which prevented the return to the former job and pushed the women to the entrepreneurship.

Table 3. Why becoming a mompreneur? Negative and positive factors

Negative (push) factors	Positive (pull) factors
1. Low income at the former workplace	1. Internet
2. Bad job opportunities	2. Changing shopping habits
3. The emergence of new types of professions and expectations	3. Increasing interest and demand for creative industries
4. After couple of years of child-rearing, the challenges of reintegration	4. Increasing valuation of local and unique products
5. Major changes regarding to community-based child raising expectations	5. Decreasing prejudice against entrepreneurs
	6. Changing individual (self) expectations for child raising
	7. Career modulation and career change is no longer deviance
	8. Urban environment

Among the negative (repulsive) factors, inappropriate job opportunities (Gergely 2013b), low income also appear, meaning that mothers are seriously calculating the cost of looking for and paying for a child supervisor and getting into work. According to their calculations, who does not have grandparents or other family members close to her, it is not worth it. The emergence of new types of professions and territories and the fears arising from these are also reflected in narratives, which can be understood in the absence of a profession for several years. Likewise, the return to "8 hours a day", "I do not know how it would be with children in the daily squirrel wheel" is also a negative factor (Gergely 2018)

There are a few factors among the positive (attractive) factors, and most of them were decisive. Many people mentioned that the Internet today allows and facilitates a lot of things, so they are more in love with work at home. Many people have also mentioned that they are increasingly experiencing changed customer and consumer needs in their narrower residential environments, and many have seen business opportunities. As more people work in creative crafts and produce local products, the fact that the region's growing interest in creative industries and space products has also stimulated them. Changes in child-rearing trends are another aspect that is also expressed as a negative, that is, that much more time and energy is needed to consciously and well educate children, but as a positive fact that women themselves have a different expectation, they would otherwise like their children to be as old as their parents. In fact, many people have said that it is not long before young people are concerned that the entrepreneur is considered a mafia, so that more and more people have an attractive identity. It is also more and more accepted that you do not have to retire from the first job, and from a teacher you can be a gourmet blogger, a social worker can be a garment designer, that is, leaving a career or a career change is becoming accepted and no deviant phenomenon.

5.3. "I'm successful, because..."

Although all of them are infinitely modest, almost none of them is bargaining, nobody brags, but if you are successful, you will sooner or later: "yes, I think so." Or "maybe yes". Or "Well, this should be different, but I think a little yes." What follows then goes on to clarify the underlying motivation of the business:

„I'm successful because I was with my children all the way through their nursery age” (40, city, 2 children)

„I'm successful because I have to work 6 hours a day and not 10. (40, village, 2 children)

„I'm successful because I have stabile income in my company and I can keep it”. (42, village, 2 children)

„I'm successful because my products are more and more popular: I can go on more and more fairs, so I do not have to sign up anymore, but the organizers call me” (33, city, 3 children)

„I'm successful because I'm my own boss” (33, city, 3 children)

5.4. Priority list

The physical and psychological integrity of children is the most important, the relationship and the household are in the following places, the professional satisfaction that they love what they are doing and there are minor acknowledgments. Then, the profitability of the enterprise, its sustainability in the long term and the preservation of the client circle. And, of course, income is important, but only after all, modestly. Of the ten subjects, one has definitely stated that income is very important because the business has to sustain itself.

6. Some Conclusion

All interviewees are owners of a relatively young (2-5 year) business, so they are in the early stages of their business. Success is interpreted in a modest scale, but basically it is not about economic success, but rather a different kind of success and goal achievement. It is very important for them to find a more flexible, predictable, easier to manage, more work-oriented and work-friendly work program and activity, namely, finding and finding a balance between private and work-life (Boneberger - Kirilova 2015). Real success is related to women's, maternal, and mother roles, and the family, child rearing, has priority in all respects.

Although it is acknowledged without exception that there must be at least as much income as one leaves the previous job, so the family income supplement is of course not negligible, profit making and "enrichment" almost never appear in narratives at this level.

Although business entrepreneur is the entrepreneur who seeks profit continuously, we have seen in mompreneurs that this is not the case (Nel et al. 2010), yet we believe that we can call these entrepreneurs as innovators as entrepreneurship plays a socially innovative significance it is a continuous analysis of the successful analysis and presentation of successful exercises and stories

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