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## **Women as Innovative Entrepreneurs in Russia: A Sociological Research**

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Svetlana Martynova<sup>1</sup>, Polina Sazonova<sup>2</sup>

**Abstract:**

*The task of developing small and medium-sized businesses in the Russian Federation involves the economic initiative of all gender groups, particularly women. In the meantime, the Russian Federation is lagging behind the developed Western countries in the world's female entrepreneurship ratings.*

*This study is a continuation of the study of the readiness of Russian women to conduct business. In the first stage of the study (2015), the mass semi-formalized interview method found that the willingness of young women to participate in business did not lead to a real increase in the number of women entrepreneurs at that age. This led to an analysis of the experiences of women entrepreneurs in order to understand the incentives and limitations that influence real business activity.*

*As a result, the purpose of this study is defined as the development and testing of a deeply structured interview method as a complementary mass survey of methodological tools in the study of gender issues Entrepreneurship in Russia (as exemplified by its innovative regions). The novelty of the study is determined by the fact that (1) the use of this method for interview women entrepreneurs is still few; (2) It is not enough to study the life strategies of young women entrepreneurs; (3) There is still a shortage of scientific knowledge about the development of female entrepreneurship in Russia. In-depth interviews were conducted during the month of June 2017 in such innovative regions of the Russian Federation as Tomsk and Novosibirsk Oblasts.*

**Keywords:** *Women, entrepreneurship, Russia, sociological research, entrepreneur activity, behavior strategy.*

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<sup>1</sup>Tomsk State University, Tomsk, Russian Federation, e-mail: [status.sm@sibmail.com](mailto:status.sm@sibmail.com)

<sup>2</sup>Tomsk State University, Tomsk, Russian Federation, e-mail: [lukinapv@rambler.ru](mailto:lukinapv@rambler.ru)

## **1. Introduction**

It is possible to address the challenge to Russia of reducing commodity dependence and restructuring the economy through the development of small and medium-sized businesses. This direction has been declared to be key to all levels of government. The President of the Russian Federation at the meeting of the Council of State on small and medium-sized enterprise development in April 2015 cited the example of developed countries where the contribution of small and medium-sized businesses to the country's GDP was 50 percent or more.

Such targets involve the economic initiative of all gender groups, in particular women. However, the entrepreneurial activity of women in the Russian Federation in world ratings is not rated high. Thus, in 2015, the Female Entrepreneurship Index (FEI) of Russia was given an index of 35.6, and the country was moved in a yearly ranking from 47th to 51th (according to the Agency's strategic initiatives. The United States, Australia, the United Kingdom, Denmark and the Netherlands (Sakha news, 2017) are taking the leading position according to this rating.

Accordingly, bridging the gender gap in the economic sphere is logically proclaimed in the Russian Federation as one of the most important objectives of the National Strategy for Women for 2017-2022 years (The National Action Strategy for Women for 2017-2022, 2017). This document is a guarantee of the commitment of the Russian state to the UN Declaration on Sustainable Development, which is to ensure the full and effective participation of women in decision-making by the year 2030 in political, economic and social spheres of society.

The stimulation of women's entrepreneurship prejudices the need to examine the factors that motivate women to demonstrate their business initiative. The objectives of such a study, in turn, raise the question of the methodology for obtaining the most informative data. In particular, this methodological framework is seen as a method of in-depth structured interviews.

As a result, the purpose of this study is defined as the development and testing of a deeply structured interview method as a complementary mass survey of methodological tools in the study of gender issues of the entrepreneurship in Russia (as exemplified by its innovative regions).

Developing the methodology we base in the theoretical position of the individual life strategies of the post-industrial society factor and the methodological shift in modern sociology towards qualitative approaches. This method of qualitative research, as a deeply structured interview, is well presented in the scientific literature in terms of its algorithms of use, the adaptation of the method to interview various social, including gender, groups. However, in the case of gender research, it is generally used for the analysis of the private sphere (Borozdina, Zdravomyslova, Temkina,

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2012; Chernova, 2013; Shadrin, 2014). Studies using this method for interview women entrepreneurs are still few. This is the novelty of our work.

In addition, in view of the insufficiency of the Study of Youth entrepreneurship we focus on a study of the life strategies of young women entrepreneurs. From this perspective, our work is developing this very relevant direction.

The relevance of the study in the country perspective is also to be noted. For example, the topic of women's entrepreneurship is highlighted in the world scientific literature, in the case of Sweden, Norway (Bogren *et al.*, 2013), Canada, Ireland, Czech Republic, Poland and Japan, Bulgaria (Yordanova, 2011), Arab Emirates (Kargwell, 2012), Central America (Roessingh and Mol, 2008), Singapore (Seet, Ahmad and Seet, 2008), Africa (Katwalo and Madichie, 2008; Brixiová and Kangoye, 2015), Iran (Bahramitash, 2013) and others. As for Russia, data are considered by scientists, including Russian, only in the context of the General survey of the world's countries (Pines, Lerner and Schwartz, 2010; Tsyganova and Shirokova, 2010; Nikolova *et al.*, 2017; Bogdanova *et al.*, 2016), based on information from world ratings: Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, Female Entrepreneurship Index. From this perspective, our study is intended to fill the lack of scientific knowledge about the development of female entrepreneurship in Russia.

The characteristics of post-industrial society factor, such as competence, creativity, initiative, determine the existence of individual life strategies and the ability to implement them. Recognition of the sovereignty of the modern person (Toffler, 1984; Sztompka, 2006; Yakhimovich, 2010; Slyadneva, 2001; Zaslavskaya, 2008; Engleheart, 1997; Grechko, 2014) is the starting point for the further scientific development of new models of public relations, public administration and methodology for the study of sociality.

As the purpose of our study is to apply methodological developments in Russia, the question of whether the desire for self-reliance and the implementation of individual life strategies is inherent in modern Russians. As early as the 1990s of XX century, R. Engleheart, noting the freedom of individual choice of life styles and citing the results of research in different countries, mentions Russia. On the realities of the twenty-first century, "freedom", "independence" (Petukhov, 2010; Lapin, 2003; Tikhonov, 2009; Whether civil society was held), the value of personal interests (Magun, 2003) are included in the research work as values of modern Russians. Russian scholars, describing societal transformations, emphasize that those people who consider post-soviet society to be more just than the Soviet ones are emphasizing the possibility of implementing the new models of individual behaviour (Ryvkina, 2005). According to research centres received in the first two decades of the twenty-first century, the possibility of achieving the goals remains high for 85-90 percent of the inhabitants of Russia and the Russians-parents, in the first place, consider the most important quality for children to achieve their goals.

It is important to note that citizens of Russia recognize the capacity to implement an individual life strategy. The research into the second decade of the twenty-first century notes that the majority of Russians are fairly positive about the state of the space of freedom in society, with the overall vector of dynamics being manifested at both the social and personal levels (Lavrikova, 2015).

The greatest expression of these values, behaviours and feelings of freedom is observed in the youth group (compared to the older age group).

Thus, the post-industrial characteristics of the Russian actor individual give us the right to apply to the study of its life strategies methods that are valid to the study of the post-industrial society.

## 2. Methods

The choice of Russian innovative regions as a site where the research can be conducted is motivated by the fact that there are more preconditions for the development of entrepreneurship. Such assumptions are the existence of a large scientific and educational complex, a large share of the youth in the structure of the people, and the innovative nature of the economy. The regions that meet these characteristics belong to the association of innovative regions of Russia. In turn, the aims of the association are to contribute to the creation of a favourable legal, economic, social and creative environment, which relates to the objectives of our study to identify motivational factors and conditions for the development of business initiative. In particular, the Russian Federation's subjects are Tomsk and Novosibirsk Oblasts.

A quantitative analysis conducted by the mass semi-formalized interview in April 2015 among young people in these regions revealed some problems related to the development of female entrepreneurship. Briefly describing the methodology of the study, mention that the respondents were students of senior university courses, the sample in each city was about 600 people to ensure that the data received was not more than 4% in error. The study was conducted under the guidance of S.E. Martynova. The detailed methodology of the study and the results in general are covered in another article (Martynova *et al.*, 2016).

The results of the study, which have given the problem of the development of female entrepreneurship, are described below. Young women are less likely than their male counterparts to consider organizing their business or participating in a new business (see Table 1).

**Table 1.** Distribution of answers to the questions: 1) "Do you consider the prospect of organizing your business or participating in a new business?"; 2) "Are you already doing it?" (% of respondents in group)

Answer options	Tomsk	Novosibirsk
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	Men	Women	Men	Women
Yes, I've already organized a business/participation in a new business	7.7	1.6	12.6	2.5
Yes, I want / am ready to organize my business or participate in a new business	44.2	39.2	42.6	38.5
I haven't thought about it yet	23.2	30.2	40.5	54.9
No, I'm not looking at that perspective	24.9	28.9	4.2	4.1

In both regions, for example, the proportion of young women already involved in business is significantly lower than that of men: Men 7.7%-12.6%, women-1.6%-2.5%. The number of women who are not yet participating in the business but are willing to do so is also lower than the number of men: Men-44.2%-42.6%, women-39.2%-38.5%. There are many more women among the people who have not yet thought about it: Men-23.2%-40.5%, women-30.2%-54.9%.

However, it is encouraging to report that:

- 1) The number of women who are willing to organize their business or participate in the new business, though less, is not great (5%-4.1% in Tomsk and Novosibirsk respectively);
- 2) The number of women categorically denying this prospect is also only slightly higher than that of men (4 per cent in Tomsk) or even equal to it (4.2 cent of men versus 4.1 per cent of women in Novosibirsk).

Attention is drawn to the following fact: while the number of young women who are willing to show a business initiative is only a few percent less than that of men, in the group of those already participating in business, the picture looks different. Thus, the number of women employed in entrepreneurship is almost five times lower than that of men. Consequently, the willingness of young women to participate in business does not lead to a real increase in the number of women entrepreneurs. This led to an analysis of the experiences of women entrepreneurs in order to understand the incentives and limitations that influence real business activity.

The choice of a qualitative methodology to continue the research initiated is motivated by a shift in the general methodological paradigm in sociology. In science, for example, there has been an increase in the importance of qualitative approaches in the study of new socialism, as a result of the central role of the actor individual (Shtompka, 2008; Yadov, 2011).

Before quality research, our work is aimed at identifying the factors that encourage women to be shown a sense of business in their young age to find a logical continuation in their own business projects. A more informative data array (compared with the results of the quantitative survey) will provide an opportunity to examine the motivational and axiological aspects of the experience of women entrepreneurs.

The methodological solution to this goal is to integrate the deep focused semistructured interview approach into the research programme that has been initiated. In our view, it is a qualitative method that has proven instrumental value in studying the motivational and axiological aspects of the social phenomena being investigated and in determining the subjective nature of their perceptions. Unlike narrative interviews, often used in quality studies with similar design, this method gives the interviewer the opportunity to control the conversation, thereby increasing the theoretical value of the information reported by the respondent with terms of the objectives of the particular study.

While the method of deep, focused semistructured interviews is well presented in the scientific literature, we have to focus on the pioneering nature of our study in terms of the combination of proposed design and challenges. The leading gender researchers who work in a qualitative paradigm tend to focus on the private sphere (problems and stresses arising from the implementation of caring and involved parenthood functions), as well as the gender perspective of the legislation and family policy package (Borozdina, Zdravomyslova and Temkina, 2012; Chernova, 2013; Shadrin, 2014). However, the research on women entrepreneurs that has been known to us is still few.

*Development of the research program, formation of a set of cases:*

The development and testing phase of the qualitative part of the study took three months (April-June 2017).

The in-depth focused interview scenario was designed so that each interview could have a thematic coverage of all the research topics, but the freedom of variation was preserved, depending on the individual biographic trajectories of an informant. Key topics focused on business motivation and expectations related to public services for entrepreneurs. The interview plan was presented by seven thematic clusters, each of which was accompanied by an illustrative list of issues, such as:

*1. Identification of motivation, incentives and disincentives for participation in business activities.*

Sample questions: What attracts you to business? What prompted you to engage in private business? Have you decided to engage in private business? What are the benefits of self-employment? Were there any deterrents? Business for you is the realization of the desired or the need? What circumstances would make you leave

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business? Why did you leave the business and under what circumstances would you have to start a new business?

2. *To determine the awareness of women entrepreneurs of the services of regional and municipal governments.* Sample questions: Do you know which authorities and administrations provide services to entrepreneurs? Do you know the list of services? If so, how can you evaluate these services in terms of relevance, need, sufficiency? What services are missing? Is there sufficient information on the activities of the authorities and their structures in support of entrepreneurship?

3. *Identification of the interest of women entrepreneurs in the services of regional and municipal governments.* Sample questions: What services do the municipal business development structures personally wish you to have to implement your project? If you don't need any services, why? Have you used these services? Under what conditions would you request services again? Why did you not take advantage of the services offered by business development structures? Under what conditions would you request services? Which specific service offer could have a positive impact on your decision? Would you like to participate in the establishment of the list and content of services provided to business by formal business development structures? What would you suggest?

4. *Definition of the evaluation of public services by women entrepreneurs.* Sample questions: How can you assess the experience of contacts with business development structures? Are you satisfied with the services provided? What are the difficulties encountered in the process of requesting a service? How important are the business services you have used to develop your business? To what extent have they affected your success or have these services not played any meaningful role?

5. *Analysis of technology for the provision of public services to entrepreneurs.* Sample questions: In what form did you receive the services of enterprise development structures: Personally or remotely? How the service was conducted: Were you provided with a typical list of services, or did you formulate your needs and get a service exactly that you need? Was there a standard/regulations for the provision of the service? Whether there was the opportunity to assess its satisfaction with the service, to comment on the quality of the service? Was the service paid for? What documents did you process to get the service?

6. *Identify the specific needs of women entrepreneurs.* Sample questions: Is there the specifics of doing business by women? If so, which one? Have you had any stage in your business to face the challenges of being a woman? Do women entrepreneurs need any special services? Should there be special programmes targeting women businessmen? Are there any organizations, communities that support women in business?

7. *Identification of a deterrent/enabling capacity to implement the business initiative of various strategies for private self-realization by women entrepreneurs.* Sample questions: Is it consistent, in your opinion, to do business with the family, with the parenthood? What resources help you reconcile business and parenting? Are there any hired personnel? Is it possible to strike a balance between career and motherhood, or do we have to make sacrifices all the time? Where are the greatest difficulties in combining? How do you compensate for the psychological overload as you rest? Under what conditions would you leave your business and dedicate yourself to the family and the children? Do you plan to have more children, why yes or no, under what conditions? How do you assess the state's services provided to parents? Do you think they're sufficient? Have these services affected the parenting decisions you made?

As a result, 8 in-depth interviews were conducted, processed and analysed (4 in Novosibirsk, 4 - in Tomsk). The members of the sample population are in the age range of 24 to 40 years. These are women who, at different stages of their biography, have been involved in the organization of their own small or medium business. In order to make the results of the approbation phase of the study more informative, the rules for the formation of a theoretical sample of cases, contrasting each other on various aspects of the phenomenon, were applied in the informant selection phase: Business areas, listing experiences, practices, and business outcomes, and other. Thus, the surveyed population was: 1) Women with business projects in trade, nutrition, domestic services, personnel and management consulting, construction; 2) Women with different educational capital (both those with no higher education and those with one or two higher education); 3) Both women in the business sector and those who are involved in small business and basic employment, or in the household the main source of income are male partner earnings; 4) As women in business, who have become the main source of household income and those who have been forced to leave business and return to work.

It is also noted that the family-parent status of an informant was considered as an additional filter in order to analyse what additional deterrent or enabling factors to implement the business initiative create a different biographical situation in terms of the woman's private implementation. The increased fragmentation of public spaces has a greater impact on women because of the need for their own realization, on the one hand, and the need to meet a large number of conflicting requests from the family and social environment, on the other (Jurczyk, 1998).

As a result, women with a different number of children were sampled (with 1-3 children or childless) who were married to an official registered marriage (including a remarriage), living with a partner in unregistered marriage, single women.

In-depth interviews with informants were conducted during the month of June 2017. All interviews were conducted by P.V. Sazonova: 6 - in private meeting in public places or at the informant work office; 2 - due to the cancellation of the provisional



arrangements using Skype. The interview lasted from 34 minutes to 1 hour and 42 minutes. All interviews were recorded on a dictaphone and subsequently transcribed with the use of naturalized transcription. In order to preserve privacy, informant names have been changed.

### 3. Results

Most of the informants offered meaningful and close answers to questions about the motives and benefits of choosing a business. The general premise is that self-employment allows for the accumulating and freer disposal of different types of resources, reallocating them at their own discretion among different spheres of life. The following are the main types of resources that, in the opinion of our informant, are contributing to the conduct of our own business.

*1. Temporary resource.* As the main benefit of self-employment, all informants call for flexible working hours, work from anywhere, have more freedom from people and circumstances, and have more time for the family, combine work and family, travel, etc.

*For me, the undeniable plus I always fought for was freedom: freedom of choice, freedom to plan a schedule. Clearly, this is a conditional freedom because your head is 24 hours busy with your business. And even if you travel, you still think about it. I had this experience when I got up at 5:00 in Portugal, and we had a four-hour time with the manager on the phone when we were having trouble with the neighbors, with the power.*

*Valerie, 40 years old, the owner of the restaurant, one child*

It is noticeable that the birth of children, especially the second child, is a further motivation for the transition from work to self-employment, because it is self-employment that allows women not only to divide jobs and families, but rather to achieve cumulative effect by combining energy and resources with private and public spheres of implementation.

*Anyway, the interest woke up and woke up ... And only after the birth of Masha [second child] I finally decided ... The brains are so turned after the children were born. I've seen how little quality children's toys are, how few books are, such that it's nice to hold. So I decided to do my business, to open the store. With books, with toys made with love, made of natural materials. And that kids could play with them in the store.*

*Olesya, 37 years old, owner of a network of children's shops, three children*

*2. Financial resources.* The choice of self-employment as the main source of income, according to our informants, is due to the higher prospects for financial well-being, stability and personal independence for themselves and their families, including from the spouse/partner.

*Your business is, of course, a good, honest job. And the dependence of your income on other people's decisions and feelings is even less. It means that you work and earn for yourself, not for someone else. I don't know if I'd be able to make that kind of money, working for hire.*

*Anastasia, 24 years old, flower business, no children*

3. *Psychosocial resources (convenience, comfort)*. Informants emphasize that their own business has allowed them to realize the need to engage in a business that they like, that gives pleasure; Work with people with whom you are comfortable; Create a comfortable, homey atmosphere in the workplace; It helped to fulfill the desire to bring benefits and joy to others.

*When a new customer came to the old place of employment, the whole team turned to Serpentarium. To whom the chief will grant this agreement, who will get this piece ... It was a very painful impression. And with my girls [shop staff] we're on the same wavelength.*

*Olesya, 37 years old, owner of a network of children's shops, three children*

The notion of a state as a source of assistance was not updated in the responses of any of the informant. At the same time, the interviews show that apprehension, distrust and exclusion from power are created at the stage of compulsory interaction.

*When I first came to tax the new cash drawer I asked one question: As? I was told: We don't know, figure it out for yourself. I mean, they don't know how it's going to be, still no cash boxes, nothing's ready. And it is always like this, we start to embed something ...*

*Maria, 38 years, the owner of the store and the Internet business, two children*

The contact with the state of women entrepreneurs from our sample is thus limited to mandatory standard procedures for registration, authorization and licence, tax reporting and other legally established business-related procedures. Informants talk about unclear and complicated interaction procedures, the lack of feedback between business and the state, the need to resort to other, informal ways of solving problems.

*I have not, in all my practice, applied for support in municipal structures, although I have studied this issue several times. But we were either not subject to any criteria or forms of support were not interesting.*

*Anna, 40 years old, construction business, two kids*

Women entrepreneurs who combine the business and the motherhood also show skepticism about the services provided by the State in the context of family policy.

*I appreciate very low the services for parents by the state. If I were to focus on them,*

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*I probably wouldn't have children. In our state, it is comforting to give birth and nurture only in a full family with a well-paid husband and, preferably, the availability of grandmothers and grandparents in a walking distance. All the rest are women's exploits. I'm used to being able to count on my strengths and abilities, so all the extra services for me are a nice bonus. A mother's capital, such as a paper that's in the nightstand.*

*Anna, 40 years old, construction business, two kids*

None of our samples used the services provided by the enterprise development centres. Only three of the eight informants have surface representations about their activities: They are aware of the existence of such organizations, but do not have their own experience of interaction, nor are they aware of the positive feedback from other entrepreneurs on their activities. The support and services that these organizations need to provide to the business are obtained from other sources: By professional associations and market structures.

*I participate regularly and with pleasure in various trainings, business seminars. I am currently attending classes at the 'Dostigatory' Business School, which creator and teacher is Marina Letitskaya. Her classes are mostly attended by women, and many of them have their own businesses.*

*Marina, 37 years old, owner of the cleaning network, two children*

An important feature of the psychography of women entrepreneurs from our sample is the high need to personalize the constructed biographical trajectories that are irreducible to normative models. The responses of all informants contain intention that life is not limited to family and work: Personal self-fulfilment is important, taking forms of participation in a variety of creative projects, sport, self-development, and education.

*Now I live, in a big way, as I want. No one dictates to me, except the children, and then ... I woke up when they wanted to. And now I wake up when I want to. I'm going to work when I want to. It's clear that there are a lot of limitations, but in a big way, I live as I want. And by the feeling: if I want to go for a summer house I do it. If I want to take the edge of I start to draw. And the kids are always with me.*

*Tatiana, 36 years old, owner of a café, two kids*

The managerial initiative of women entrepreneurs is also being pursued in private in the form of advanced life-process management skills. This is reflected in the results of the study as the management of available resources and the maximizing of their usefulness, the effective planning of interactions between household members and the social network of support, and the ability to organize support for themselves and their ideas, learning from a variety of sources. The social structure of the daily life of our informants is a complex system of individuals, roles, and patterns of cooperation, requiring a high degree of personal activity by women and the availability of financial and organizational resources. Support networks for women

entrepreneurs include senior relatives, paid workers and friends helping to care for children in the home. Within such extended networks, there are a variety of types of support and resource exchanging that complement or compensate for inefficient public and social institutions.

*For eight years I've been a mother, and all these years I've been involved in everything: Grandmas, grandfathers, nannies, kindergarten. I mean, if I need something, I'm looking for a way to organize it. If there's a feeling you should be with your husband, it's the evening nanny. We go to the movies twice a week, we do something else ... Then the nanny comes. If I need to work I sent the baby to the kindergarten. At different stages of life, it is different, but they are always involved. Maria, 38 years old.*

*Maria, 38 years, the owner of the store and the Internet business, two children*

#### **4. Discussion**

The test of the in-depth interview methodology was carried out in a relatively small, theoretically sampled contrasting universe. However, even at this intermediate research stage, we have been able to obtain an informative and valuable set of data on the subjective aspects of the experiences of women entrepreneurs and, on this basis, to formulate a number of research findings that will be tested and supplemented in subsequent phases of the study.

Start by celebrating the instrumental convenience of the technique we use: the scenario of a deep semistructured interview, on the one hand, allows the researcher to manage the conversation in terms of its content, which is particularly important when the informant deviates from the topic or changes the story type (for example, instead of the expected description of the event or procedure offers an evaluation judgment). On the other hand, the method leaves enough room for the fuller realization of the narrative potential of an informant.

The method of depth interviews proved to be adequate for the purposes and objectives of the study, because even a relatively small set of cases (case) provided an array of informative data for the research into women's entrepreneurial development. Thus, we have greatly increased our understanding of the circumstances in which women are prepared to transform their business initiative, which we have identified during the mass consultation phase, into real business projects.

In our view, the identified psychographic traits of women entrepreneurs are: the high degree of independence, the need to construct individual life trajectories, the active commitment to a complete life of self-reliance—clearly characterizes Russian women in business, and these characteristics can be attributed to the country characteristics. At the same time, such characteristics should be taken into account in the

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development of management technologies aimed at supporting small and medium-sized enterprises.

Turning to modern sociological theory, we tend to interpret the interviewed characteristics of the *job and life balance* (*work life balance*) concept, which involves achieving an optimum combination between obligations imposed on the individual in both the public and private spheres and the completeness of personal realization. In the perspective of a particular life-course, this means designing an individual with biographic strategies that will achieve a high quality of life in an objective (health, career, completeness of private life, etc.) and subjective (satisfaction, happiness) measurements (Rozhdenstvenskaya, 2012).

Although a number of writers commits a tendency to reduce the participation of older relatives in the family affairs of their children and grandchildren, the comments of our informants testify to the value of instrumental and emotional support from grandmothers.

Attention should also be given to the lack of motivation of women entrepreneurs to participate in the development of services that could be made available to business entities by authorities or specialized business support centres. None of our informants offered a meaningful answer as to what services they would be interested in in the development of their business, which can be interpreted as a lack of facilities for small and medium-sized businesses against the state as a potential source of support. We can make it a country-specific feature of doing business in the Russian Federation. At the same time, it is to be concluded that a solution to the current challenge to the state of stimulating entrepreneurial activity must be supported by a set of measures aimed at building confidence between the state and business.

As a research observation, it is difficult to find women entrepreneurs in the age group up to 30 years. This result is well in line with the findings of many writers on the widespread trend of postponing important biographical projects to a later age as a result of the stretching of the education period. This confirmation is found in an interview with most of our informants, who repeatedly stressed that the opening of the business was preceded by a period of long learning in a variety of ways; Many also needed employment experience to understand the inconsistencies of their own trajectories with similar employment formats. By these circumstances, we can explain why the willingness of young women to participate in business does not lead to a real increase in the number of women entrepreneurs at the same age. Thus, the in-depth interview gave a response to a question identified in the quantitative study. Add to these factors the gender-specific nature of the Russian society, which is still characterized by the earlier age of marriage for women as well as the birth of children, in comparison with the western countries. As a result, the women's business start is delayed.

## **5. Conclusions**

In our view, the impressive amount of analytical material obtained from the processing of a small collection of cases collected to test the methodology demonstrates the validity of the methodological trajectory we have chosen. If the initial research phase of the mass survey helped to identify the gender imbalance in the implementation of the business initiative, the subsequent phase of the in-depth focused interviews increased our knowledge of the values and motivational aspects of women's entrepreneurship, the integration of which in the planning phase between the state and business will help to eliminate this gender imbalance.

However, in the subsequent stages of the study, a number of adjustments and additions to the research programme are planned with a view to enhancing its complementarity.

First, a representative, formalized interview of women entrepreneurs is planned for the sake of greater comparability of data collected. In continuation of the qualitative research method, the selection of respondents will be made from a sample of the mass survey already completed. The number of in-depth interviews is expected to reach ten in each region, including the addition of women entrepreneurs to the sample from cities of regional importance.

Secondly, in-depth interviews with small and medium-sized business development centres are envisaged to provide a comprehensive picture of government support for entrepreneurs. Complementary methods will be the content analysis and gender analysis of documents defining the content and procedure of providing support to small and medium-sized business entities. Since Russia is not among the leading countries in the global ranking of women's entrepreneurship, it is clear that the autonomy of women in business without the use of public services for entrepreneurs has not yet yielded the expected growth of business entities. Consequently, the role of effective support from government can be decisive.

Thirdly, the programme of research for other innovative regions of the Russian Federation is being expanded to better justify country-specific features. The Republic of Bashkortostan and Tatarstan, the Irkutsk Oblast and the Krasnoyarsk Krai are the promising destinations (Ranking of Russian innovation regions: The version of 2016, 2017).

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