

How to Build a Career if you are a Woman?

Gurieva Svetlana^a, Udavikhina Ulyana^b, Mararitsa Larisa^c, Kazantseva Tatiana^d
and Kinunen Tamara^e

Social Psychology Department, St. Petersburg State University, St. Petersburg, Russia
s.gurieva@spbu.ru, uludav@gmail.com, larisamararitsa@mail.ru, tatakaz@mail.ru, kinunen@yandex.ru

Keywords: Career, Gender gap, Gender Inequality, Career strategies.

Abstract: As part of our study of the phenomenon of gender inequality in Russia, we studied 575 women. Based on the results of theoretical analysis and the survey, we identified 12 women's career strategies - scenarios of women's behavior, reflecting the combination of her life situation and decisions made. These strategies are ways to realize the desire to make a career and are actualized precisely for "female leadership", when a woman meets the gender barrier. An analysis of the latent factors behind the behavioral scenarios found showed that the behavior of women who want to succeed professionally depends on 4 key issues: 1) whether leadership, career success is their priority; 2) whether they faced dual demands, difficulties because of their gender (gender barrier); 3) whether they succeeded in overcoming this barrier or whether it was taken for granted; 4) how demanding and loaded their "women's work" is in the family. Of the 12 strategies, only one - "development of a female leader" (prioritizing their work goals with proactive behavior, constant development, the search for social capital and role models among women) leads to subjective career success in all its manifestations, its main predictor is a component of career capital "know how". The other strategies related to greater competence, gaining connections, love of one's work, lead only to more tension or refusal of realization in the family, a decrease in the level of subjective well-being.

1 INTRODUCTION

Among the consequences of the global crisis associated with the coronavirus pandemic, which has affected many aspects of society, it is worth highlighting the changes in the gender gap index, which is directly related to the problem of gender inequality. According to the generalised statistics of the World Economic Forum (WEF) for 2020-2021, the situation with gender inequality in many countries of the world remains difficult (The Global Gender Gap Report 2021). In particular, Russia in 2021 ranked 81st out of 156 countries with a gender gap index of 0.708, dropping its ranking from 75th place in 2018 (The Global Gender Gap Report 2021: 10). The list of countries with the highest gender equality

index is still headed by Iceland, Finland, Norway and Sweden.

It is important to note that the existing changes in legal norms, social conditions and political trends in Russia have a certain impact on the strengthening of gender equality (Voronina 2013), but in general, the manifestations of gender inequality remain quite stable and are interpreted within the framework of the socio-psychological phenomenon of "retarded progress" (Cohen 2009). On the one hand, society in Russia provides women with ample opportunities for education, personal development, and professional development, on the other hand, there is a significant gap in income inequality and financial independence (Kazantseva et al., 2020). In addition, women may face psychological resistance from colleagues and managers, relatives and acquaintances in the situation

^a <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4305-432X>

^b <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1070-2412>

^c <https://orcid.org/00000003-3858-5369>

^d <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2540-2976>

^e <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-7107-099X>

of occupying leadership positions both in business and politics (Ibarra 1997).

One-way women can narrow the gender gap is to use certain strategies in building their careers. Career strategies are understood as scenarios of a woman's behaviour that reflect the fusion of her life situation and decisions (Voronkova 2019; Gurieva 2021). These strategies are ways to realise the desire to succeed, to make a career and are actualised exactly for "female leadership", when a woman meets the gender barrier (Cloninger 2017).

2 METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Purpose of the research: to identify and study the peculiarities of Russian women's career building strategies as a way to reduce the gender gap.

Research methodology. To realise the research objectives, the following theoretical approaches were taken as a basis:

-the concept of "Gendered organisation" ("Gendered organisation"), according to which there is a "gendered regime" in the organisation: employees react to gender attributes when making personnel decisions, allocating resources, which supports injustice and hierarchy (Mararitz et al. 2019);

-the concept of "Gender in organisation" ("Gender in organisation"), according to which the difficulties in building a career in an organisation for a woman are due to individual characteristics related to gender (Acker 2006).

3 RESEARCH METHODS

The main method of qualitative-quantitative research is a survey. In the course of work on the project the developed and translated methodologies were tested to assess the gender regime and creative potential of the organisation, to identify career strategies and the specifics of the organisational environment, measuring the expression of gender inequality at the individual-behavioural, normative and structural levels. It is important to note that this is the first Russian-language toolkit for assessing gender inequality within the framework of the modern approach to its study - "gender mainstreaming organisation". The developed set of methodologies made it possible to assess the expression of gender inequality on three levels: individual-behavioural,

normative and structural, and two aspects - objective and subjective.

4 STUDY SAMPLE

The study involved 575 women, aged 19 to 82 years ($M \approx 35$ years), among whom 74% had higher education, 14.8% lived in Moscow, 11.7% in St. Petersburg, 4.3% in Novosibirsk, 2.6% in Nizhny Novgorod, 2.4% in Ufa, 2.3% in Yekaterinburg, 1.9% in Samara, and 60% in other Russian cities. Almost half of the respondents are married (49.4%), 20.1% have a permanent partner, 26.3% are single, 3.3% chose "other", 0.9% did not answer the question. 37.9 per cent of respondents have no children, 33.7 per cent have one child, 23.5 per cent have two children, 3.4 per cent have three children, 0.7 per cent have four or more children, 0.7 per cent did not answer the question. 32.5 per cent have annual income of less than R300,000, 28.9 per cent between R300,000 and R600,000, 21.6 per cent between R600,000 and R1,200,000, and 8.7 per cent over R1,200,000; 0.9 per cent have no income and 4.3 per cent refused to answer. 61.6 per cent of respondents are executives and specialists, 25.4 per cent are junior and middle managers, 7.8 per cent are top managers, and 5.2 per cent found it difficult/refused to answer. 64% work in only one organisation, 27.3% have additional employment, 7.3% work on a project basis, do not feel connected to the organisation, 1.4% do not work/refused to answer. 57.9% work in private sector companies, 30.8% work - in state-owned companies, 8.3% - in companies with state participation, 3% did not answer. 83.6% work in Russian companies, 5% in international companies with head office in Russia, 7.1% in international companies with a branch in Russia, the rest - in foreign companies without representation in Russia (2.3% refused to answer). 15.3% work in companies with up to 20 employees, 15% work in companies with up to 100 employees, 31.6% work in companies with 100 to 1,000 employees, and 19.1% work in companies with more than 1,000 employees (5.2% did not answer). 12.9% work in science and education, 17.2% in trade and commerce, 8% in manufacturing, 6.1% in information technology, 9.9% in health care, 6.1% in finance and insurance, 4.9% in construction and architecture, with each of the other areas involving less than 3% of the sample.

5 RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Based on the results of the theoretical analysis and the survey, 12 female career strategies were identified. In the following, statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) results of the correlation analysis of career strategies with women's life and work circumstances, as well as with the characteristics of the organisation will be presented (Pearson and Spearman correlation coefficients (for ranking scales) and comparison of averages using the non-parametric Mann-Whitney statistical criterion for correlates of strategies presented in the nominative scale, with correction for Bonferroni multiple hypothesis testing).

The strategy "Development of a woman leader" is positively related to the creative potential of the organisation ($r = 0.36$), to the career development resources available in the organisation ($r = 0.49$), to all components of career capital (with "I know why" $r = 0.36$, with "I know who" $r = 0.59$, with "I know how" $r = 0.51$), with subjective success ($r = 0.54$) and satisfaction with different spheres of life (work $r = 0.43$; financial situation $r = 0.25$; leisure time $r = 0.28$; psychological well-being $r = 0.24$). Women with this career strategy are more likely to hold a leadership position in an organisation ($U = 2981.0$). Interestingly, a weak relationship was found with perceived organisational policies ($r = 0.24$) and indicators of gender inequality (0.15).

The strategy "Trying to manage everything" was positively related to all components of career capital (c "I know why" $r = 0.32$, c "I know who" $r = 0.38$, c "I know how" $r = 0.40$) and to subjective success ($r = 0.31$). It is worth noting that the connection of the strategy "trying to do everything" with "I know why" $r = 0.32$ with "I know who" $r = 0.38$, with "I know how" $r = 0.40$ and with subjective success ($r = 0.31$). It is worth noting that the connection of the strategy "trying to manage everything" with subjective success is not only two times weaker than that of "development of a woman leader", but also is provided only by the subscale of career satisfaction (interest in one's work, attitude to it with enthusiasm (0.27)). While almost all subscale of subjective success correlate with the strategy "development of a woman leader", except for the quality of work and connection with personal life (integration). Women with this career strategy are more likely to be married ($U = 3882.5$) and have children ($U = 4335.5$), which corresponds to the definition of the strategy.

The strategy "Fighting risks" is associated with the absence of children ($U = 4567.5$), and is positively correlated with the reflexivity of the organisation as a component of the climate of openness to innovation

($r = 0.27$) and the interest of top management in its projects ($r = 0.28$), as well as - the availability of developing social resources as a component of career capital "know who" ($r = 0.29$). These relationships are logical and directly follow from the strategy definition. The strategy "Leadership without influence" is negatively related to the climate of openness to innovation in the organisation ("Climate of openness to innovation" $r = -0.21$), primarily the lack of external focus/responsiveness to the market ($r = -0.35$) and the proportion of women in leadership positions (-0.37). Positive with the perception of policies ($r = 0.30$, especially with the prioritisation of informal, hidden mechanisms in the area of promotion and compensation policies ($r = -0.35$)) and the proportion of women in management positions (-0.37). It is positively related to the perception of policies ($r = 0.30$, especially to the priority of informal, hidden mechanisms in the field of promotion and compensation policies ($r = 0.33$)), as well as to normative and structural indicators of gender inequality (c "Expression of norms" $r = 0.39$, with "structural, glass barriers to women's self-actualisation" $r = 0.55$). In addition, this strategy is negatively related to recognition as a component of subjective career success ($r = -0.29$).

The strategy "Negotiating at work and at home" is positively related to normative and structural indicators of gender inequality (c "Expression of norms" $r = 0.27$, with "glass barriers" $r = 0.23$ (especially "glass escalator" (0.28)), with leadership position ($U = 3548.0$) with marriage ($U = 4481.0$) and children ($U = 4334.0$). In addition, this strategy is associated with high scores of professional knowledge and mastery as the "know how" component of career capital (0.28). This strategy seems to be related to a situation such as role overload in women who are both key professionals, managers and mothers - and work in organisations with signs of gender inequality in which it is extremely difficult for a woman to assume a leadership position.

For the strategy "Playing by the rules", a trend-level relationship was found with "Norms Expression" ($r = 0.19$).

The strategy "Career discount" is positively related to normative and structural indicators of gender inequality (with "Norms Expression" $r = 0.34$, with "Glass Barriers" $r = 0.37$). Women with this career strategy are more likely to hold a leadership position in an organisation ($U = 3888.0$), to be married ($U = 3990.0$) and to have children ($U = 3870.0$). These relationships are logical and directly follow from the strategy definition.

The strategy "Self-limitation" is positively related to normative and structural indicators of gender inequality (c "Norms Expression" $r=0.29$, with "glass cliff barriers" $r=0.29$ (especially "glass cliff" (0.28)), and negatively related to such component of climate of openness to innovation as external focus/market responsiveness ($r=-0.27$). Women with this strategy earn less ($U=5053.5$) and have fewer children ($U=4773.0$).

The "Hidden Career" strategy is negatively related to the "know who" component of career capital ($r=-0.35$) and to annual income ($U=4055.0$). Women with this career strategy are more likely to be married ($U=4209.0$) and have a child ($U=4325.5$), which is consistent with the definition of the strategy.

The strategy "Career without gender constraints" is negatively related to perceptions of organisational policies ($r=-0.29$, especially the priority of informal, hidden mechanisms in the area of promotion and compensation policies ($r=-0.29$), and to normative and structural indicators of gender inequality (c "Norms Expression" $r=-0.86$, with "glass barriers" $r=-0.52$), which is consistent with the strategy definition.

The strategy "Career correction" is associated with the structural indicator of gender inequality (with "glass barriers" $r=0.32$), which corresponds to the definition of the strategy.

The strategy "Gender Chameleon" is positively associated with the erasure of one's gender ("undoing gender"), with normative and structural indicators of gender inequality (with "Norms Expression" $r=0.40$, with "glass barriers" $r=0.45$) and with the "know who" component of career capital ($r=0.27$, primarily developmental social capital (0.29)), negatively with the proportion of women in the organisation (-0.27).

6 CONCLUSIONS

An analysis of the latent factors behind the behavioural scripts found revealed that the behaviours of women who want to succeed professionally are influenced by 4 key issues:

- 1) whether leadership, career success is their priority;
- 2) whether they face double demands, difficulties because of their gender (gender barrier);
- 3) whether they manage to overcome this barrier or whether it has been taken for granted;
- 4) how demanding and burdensome is their "women's work" in the family.

Career without gender constraints and hidden career as scenarios stand apart: they describe two completely different life situations and goal

orientations. The remaining strategies showed a rich and interpretable pattern of links both to the organisation's environment and to success and its career capital.

Of the 12 strategies, only one - 'developing a female leader' (prioritising her work goals with proactive behaviour, continuous development, seeking social capital and role models among women) leads to subjective career success in all its manifestations, its main predictor being the 'know how' component of career capital. Other strategies related to greater competence, acquisition of connections, love for one's work, lead only to greater tension or refusal of realisation in the family, and to a decrease in the level of subjective well-being.

The results of this study make it possible, albeit with caution (due to the inability to judge causal relationships), to formulate career development recommendations for training women working in commercial companies.

For the mutual benefit and protection of Authors and Publishers, it is necessary that Authors provide formal written Consent to Publish and Transfer of Copyright before publication of the Book. The signed Consent ensures that the publisher has the Author's authorization to publish the Contribution.

The copyright form is located on the authors' reserved area.

The form should be completed and signed by one author on behalf of all the other authors.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The publication was supported by Grant No 22-18-00452 «Psychosocial design of the workspace as a factor in the employee subjective well-being and the innovative potential of the organization» from the Russian Scientific Foundation.

REFERENCES

- Voronina, O.A., 2013. Gender Equality Policy in Modern Russia: Problems and Contradictions. *Woman in Russian Society*, 9 (3), p.12–20. (In Russ.).
- Voronkova, A.I., 2019. Meta description of female business engagement scenarios. *Vestnik instituta sotziologii*, 10 (4), p. 231–248. (In Russ.).
- Gurieva, S.D., Udavikhina, U.A., 2021. Strategies for Overcoming the Gender Gap by Working Women (Case Study of Russian Organizations). *Administrative Consulting* (9), p. 79-88. (In Russ.).
- Kazantseva, T.V., Gurieva, S.D., Mararitsa, L.V., 2020. Subjective experience of gender inequality by working

- women. *St. Petersburg Psychological Journal*, (3) 3, p. 35–52. (In Russ.)
- Mararitsa, L.V., Gurieva S.D., Kazantseva, T.V., 2019. The phenomenon of gender inequality as a factor in women's career capital: framing the problem // *Human Psychology in Education*, 1 (1), p. 44–52. (In Russ.)
- Acker, J., 2006. Inequality regimes: Gender, class, and race in organizations. *Gender and society*, 20 (4), p. 441–464.
- Cloninger, S., 2017 Exploring the Lives of Women Who Lead, 2017. E-book library [online]. Available at: <https://aura.antioch.edu/etds/370> (Accessed: 10 February 2022).
- Cohen, P.N., Huffman, M.L., Knauer, S., 2009. Stalled Progress? Gender Segregation and Wage Inequality Among Managers, 1980-2000. *Work and Occupations*, 36(4), p. 318–342.
- Ibarra, H., 1997. Paving an alternative route: Gender differences in managerial networks. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 60 (1), p. 91–102.
- The Global Gender Gap Report 2021 by World Economic Forum, 2021. E-book library [online]. URL: Available at: https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2021.pdf (Accessed: 10 February 2022).