

# The Potential Influence of Gender Role Perceptions on Behavioral Differences Between Male and Female Entrepreneurs

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**Abstract.** Gender role perceptions, as a deeply ingrained social and cultural phenomenon, exert a profound and complex influence on the behavioral differences between male and female entrepreneurs. Rooted in the family, education, and social structures, these perceptions are transmitted and reinforced through various channels such as the media, culture, and traditional customs. Entrepreneurial activities play a pivotal role in economic development. At the macro level, entrepreneurship significantly contributes to economic growth, job creation, income mobility, and the promotion of innovation. At the micro level, entrepreneurship serves as a vital form of individual employment that not only increases personal wealth but also enhances subjective satisfaction and well-being. With the acceleration of social transformation and economic restructuring in China, along with deeper marketization, informatization, industrialization, and internationalization, as well as higher levels of education among women, female entrepreneurship has gained more opportunities. Increasingly, women—especially educated women—are joining the entrepreneurial wave and have become an indispensable part of China's entrepreneurial talent pool. This paper delves into how gender role perceptions influence the behaviors of male and female entrepreneurs and, on this basis, proposes a range of specific measures to promote gender equality and encourage female entrepreneurship. The aim is to create a more equitable, inclusive, and diverse entrepreneurial environment for both men and women.

**Keywords:** Gender Role Perceptions, Male and Female Entrepreneurs, Behavioral Difference.

## 1. Introduction

Entrepreneurial activities, as a crucial engine driving economic growth and social progress, have demonstrated strong innovative capacity. However, within the field of entrepreneurship, gender differences have become an important factor to consider. Throughout the entrepreneurial process, men and women often exhibit different performances, reflecting their respective advantages and challenges, and revealing the profound impact of gender role perceptions on entrepreneurial behaviors. Because gender differences are deeply embedded in the cognitive frameworks of society and culture, they shape traditional expectations and stereotypes about the roles of men and women<sup>[1-3]</sup>. Yet, with the advent of the new economy, alongside emerging production and lifestyle changes, women have been presented with more opportunities for entrepreneurship, and higher demands are also placed upon them. This paper offers an in-depth analysis of how gender role perceptions influence the behaviors of both male and female entrepreneurs. It then explores how policy guidance and social support can help build a more inclusive and equitable entrepreneurial environment, jointly advancing societal progress and development.

## 2. The Necessity of Changing Gender Role Perceptions

### 2.1. Promoting Gender Equality

In traditional thinking, men are viewed as the economic pillar of the family, while women are expected to assume household responsibilities. This mode of division directly restricts women's opportunities and resource acquisition in areas such as entrepreneurship and career development. With continued economic reform and opening-up, people's mindsets have gradually changed,

recognizing that gender should not serve as a yardstick for individual abilities. Transforming gender role perceptions can break down entrenched gender barriers and create fair entrepreneurial environments for both men and women. Over time, women can enjoy the same entrepreneurial opportunities as men, pursuing their career aspirations freely. However, society must more justly allocate resources to ensure that women have equal access to capital, technical support, market information, and other vital resources, enabling them to go farther and more steadily on the path of entrepreneurship.

## **2.2. Enhancing Personal Freedom**

Under the constraints of traditional views, men and women are confined to specific societal roles and expectations, limiting their personal development. Yet, as awareness of gender equality rises, men and women are gradually gaining equal freedom of choice. Women can boldly chase their career dreams by choosing entrepreneurship that suits their interests, rather than being seen solely as caregivers. Meanwhile, men should also take on the responsibility of caring for the family and balance career pursuits with family life<sup>[4-5]</sup>. Changes in thinking can fully unleash the potential of both men and women, granting them the freedom to develop personal interests and talents, thus spurring social innovation and promoting a diversified economy. Looking ahead, we should advocate for gender equality and encourage both men and women to pursue their dreams fearlessly, working together to create a more open, inclusive, and liberal social environment.

## **3. The Influence of Gender Role Perceptions on Behavioral Differences Between Male and Female Entrepreneurs**

### **3.1. Promotion Methods**

With global economic growth and the rise of women's status, female entrepreneurs have emerged as a significant force in the business sector. The number of senior managers and total employees in enterprises led by male and female entrepreneurs are relatively similar. However, in female-led enterprises, the proportion of female employees and female middle-to-senior managers is higher than in male-led firms. Specifically, in businesses led by female entrepreneurs, more than half of the employees are female, a figure higher than that found in companies led by men. Furthermore, in female-led businesses, nearly half of the middle and senior managers are female, whereas in male-led enterprises, the figure is below 20%. Compared with men, female entrepreneurs are more inclined to recruit female employees and are more willing to promote female executives. Female entrepreneurs also tend to be concentrated in the service sector, where the proportion of female employees is typically higher. The observed difference may stem from industry characteristics rather than a specific preference on the part of female entrepreneurs, thereby highlighting female entrepreneurs' proactive attitude and practical actions in promoting gender equality.

### **3.2. Entrepreneurial Motivation**

In recent years, the ranks of female entrepreneurs have expanded significantly, making them an important driver of economic and social development. An in-depth look at the motivations and values of female entrepreneurs reveals that the largest proportion of them choose "to prove their own value." Additionally, a substantial share cites "helping others more effectively," "exercising their abilities," and "working alongside outstanding individuals" as important reasons (see Table 1). Concerning work-related goals and values, female entrepreneurs generally emphasize proving personal worth and realizing life's meaning, while also aiming to help others achieve their goals. From a broader perspective, female entrepreneurs born in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s share largely similar motivations for starting a business, though each cohort exhibits unique traits. Specifically, those born in the 1960s place slightly greater emphasis on "helping others more effectively" and "bearing the expectations of employees," compared to entrepreneurs from the 1970s and 1980s. Meanwhile, those

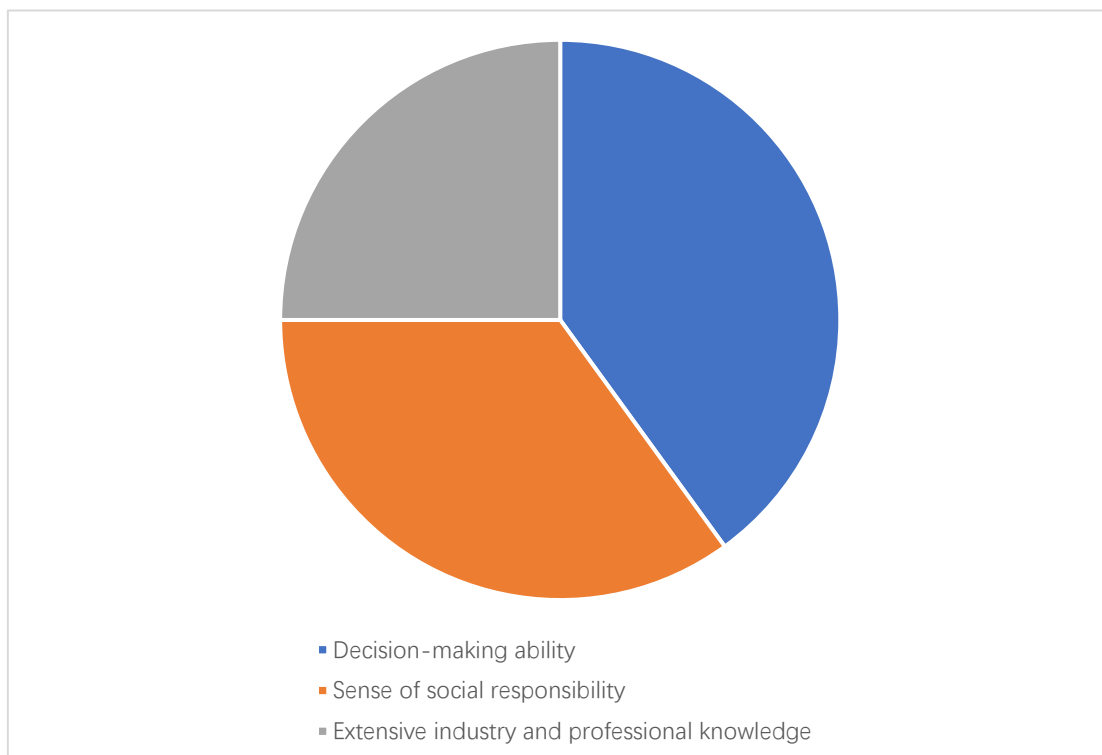
born in the 1980s are more concerned about “attaining financial freedom and economic independence” and “pursuing a free life,” ranking these factors higher than the 1960s and 1970s groups. In contrast, entrepreneurs from the 1970s place more importance on attaining higher social status through entrepreneurship, which may be related to the socio-cultural environment of their formative years.

**Table 1.** The Sources of Motivation for Female Entrepreneurs (%)

	Post-60s (%)	Post-70s (%)	Post-80s (%)
<b>Proving one's own value</b>	53.5	53.8	52.9
<b>Better helping others</b>	43.7	39.6	37.4
<b>Exercising one's abilities</b>	40.6	37.6	33.9
<b>Working with outstanding individuals</b>	34.4	35.5	30.8

### 3.3. Decision-Making Ability

When examining how female entrepreneurs define the traits of a successful business leader, they highlight decision-making ability, a strong sense of social responsibility, and solid professional competencies (see Figure 1) as key aspects. Among these traits, female entrepreneurs born in the 1960s show a relatively higher level of recognition for these three qualities and abilities, whereas those born in the 1980s rate “innovation and risk-taking spirit,” “strong social networks,” and “foresight” more highly than those from the 1960s and 1970s (see Table 6). Regarding self-assessment, female entrepreneurs believe they perform well in professional competence, social responsibility, and communication/coordination, aligning with their understanding of the qualities and abilities required for a successful entrepreneur. However, they see room for improvement in areas such as “strong moral character and prestige” and “talent recognition and utilization,” which suggests potential directions for achieving a more comprehensive and balanced image of a successful entrepreneur [6-7].



**Figure 1.** Proportion of Each Ability

## **4. Specific Measures to Promote Gender Equality and Encourage Female Entrepreneurship**

### **4.1. Improving Societal and Cultural Discourse**

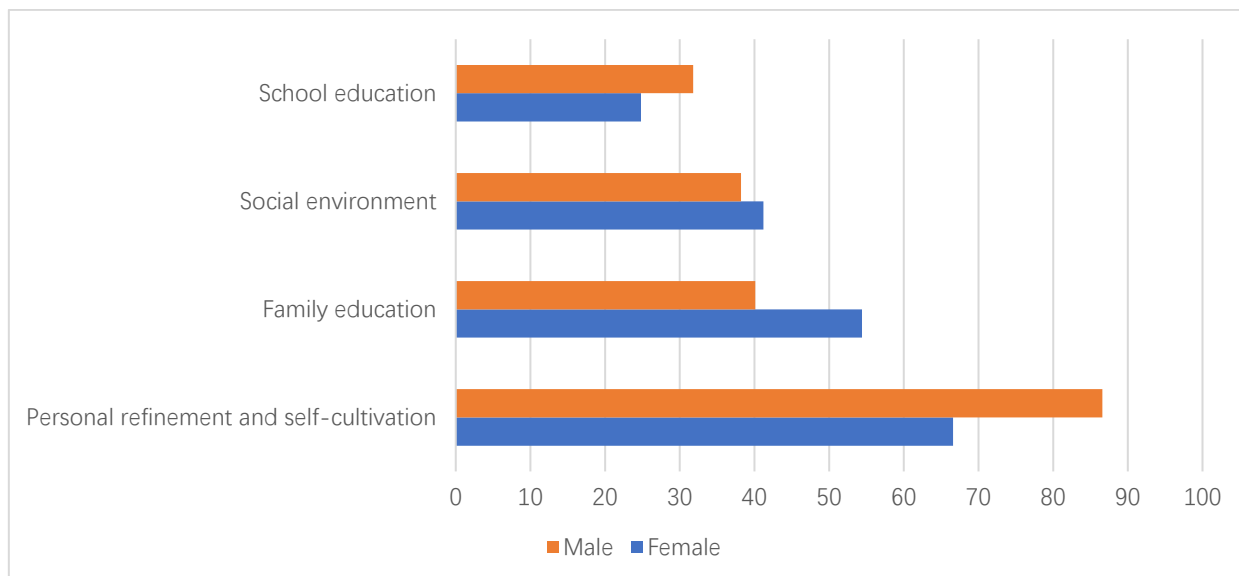
In today's social context, female entrepreneurs generally express optimism about the current environment, believing that economic systems, legal frameworks, policies, and cultural settings are relatively favorable for their growth. However, influenced by certain objective factors, nearly 40% of female entrepreneurs indicate that unfavorable traditional beliefs in China hinder women's entrepreneurial development. It is thus necessary to guide public opinion effectively—eliminating ingrained biases such as the male-dominant mindset—and to remove the social barriers and external skepticism that hamper women's professional advancement. In practice, most female entrepreneurs are concentrated in small and medium-sized private enterprises; hence, the government must continue to pursue market-oriented reforms, improve fair competition in the market, and invigorate enterprise vitality and the internal driving force for economic development. It is also crucial to promote the entrepreneurial spirit centered on innovation across society and to foster a system, culture, and financial environment that encourage innovation while tolerating failure. Creating such a supportive external setting will enable female entrepreneurs to grow and thrive.

### **4.2. Enhancing the Social Service System**

Compared with male entrepreneurs, female entrepreneurs often shoulder heavier family responsibilities during their entrepreneurial journeys. Nearly one-fifth of female entrepreneurs believe that insufficient social services for the elderly and children hinder their professional development, while about ten percent cite the lack of third-party services, such as domestic help, as a constraint. An even higher proportion of those born in the 1980s regard these two factors as impediments to female entrepreneurship. This finding reflects the reality that inadequate social service support—for example, underdeveloped domestic service industries—consumes a considerable amount of women's time and energy due to household chores. To promote the comprehensive development of female entrepreneurs, it is necessary to encourage and support the healthy growth of industries related to social services, offering more professional and convenient forms of assistance. Only by genuinely alleviating the family burdens female entrepreneurs face can society create more advantageous conditions for their business endeavors.

### **4.3. Establishing a Lifelong Learning Mindset**

Among the many factors hindering female entrepreneurs, issues related to ways of thinking and methods of decision-making and management are especially prominent. The highest-ranking factor identified by female entrepreneurs is “overemphasis on emotional thinking and insufficient rational thinking.” Such factors relate closely to women's cognitive approaches and decision-making and management practices, which significantly affect business performance. Female entrepreneurs must consciously strengthen their capacity for learning, strategic decision-making, and scientific management to lay a stronger foundation for their careers. In addition, some female entrepreneurs also identify challenges such as “rarely attempting innovation,” “pursuing a stable life and secure future,” “lack of confidence or bravery,” and “limited desire for personal potential development.” Although these traits may stem from women's natural risk aversion, cautious decision-making, or tendency to be easily satisfied, they can also become bottlenecks to career growth. Figure 2 shows that family upbringing and social environment are major factors influencing the moral character of female entrepreneurs. Hence, to encourage women's further professional development, fostering a culture of lifelong learning is essential<sup>[8]</sup>. Proactively acquiring new knowledge and new ideas can pave the way for leaps in career achievement.



**Figure 2.** Factors Influencing Moral Character Formation (%)

#### 4.4. Improving the Business Environment

A deeper understanding of women’s career development paths requires a close look at the key factors female entrepreneurs value when hiring women into mid-level and senior positions. Generally, the three most important elements they consider are professional competence, team cohesiveness, and communication skills; meanwhile, dedication, execution ability, and the capacity for big-picture thinking are also highly valued<sup>[9-10]</sup>. This indicates that professional competence is particularly crucial, alongside the “soft strengths” of leadership and team management. Further analysis suggests that with increasing age, female entrepreneurs place greater importance on professional competence, team cohesiveness, and dedication, whereas those born in the 1980s emphasize communication skills, execution ability, and big-picture thinking. Highly educated female entrepreneurs pay somewhat less attention to team cohesiveness and instead focus on market sensitivity. As structural reforms deepen across the economic sphere, society can better leverage modern information technology to improve the career development pathways for working women, thus promoting equal employment opportunities and career advancement for women<sup>[11]</sup>.

### 5. Conclusion

Gender role perceptions shape behavioral differences between men and women, leading to inequalities. Even when women possess the same objective conditions for entrepreneurship as men, these traditional perceptions can create self-imposed limitations that prevent them from fully realizing their potential. Conventionally, men are seen as the dominant force in entrepreneurship—thought to have the requisite risk-taking spirit, leadership, and decision-making abilities—while women are tagged as family caregivers seeking stability. Such stereotypes restrict women’s entrepreneurial choices and undermine gender equality. However, as society becomes more open, more opportunities emerge for female entrepreneurs. By improving employment environments, increasing income, and boosting social status, female entrepreneurship serves as a powerful force for advancing gender equality and social harmony. It can also raise the level of economic innovation and mitigate the impact of an aging population, thus helping China navigate economic transformation challenges under the new normal and achieve more robust growth.

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