Structure of Slovak Families and Women’s Attitudes towards Its Impact on Their Employment

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Abstract.

Research background: The disadvantaged position of women in the labor market is a well-known fact. However, there are also differences between women themselves, which put certain groups in an even more disadvantaged position compared to others. Women entered the paid workforce after centuries of “quiet revolution” (McManus and Johnson, 2020) and still they remain more likely to be in insecure employment, work varying hours or short hours, and dominate in particular sectors (Wilson, 2019).

Purpose of the article: Our study aimed at the analysis of the link between structure of family (household) Slovak woman live in and their attitudes towards its impact on their employment.

Methods: The Chi-square statistic as a non-parametric test to analyze group differences was used on the attained questionnaire and a Cramer’s V as the most common strength test was used to test the association between the data after the significant Chi-square results has been obtained.

Findings & Value added: Recently, the interest of researchers worldwide is aimed at the disadvantaged position of woman on the labor market compared to man. They focus mainly on the wage gap and other inequalities, since most of these studies has quantitative character with the focus of post hoc status description. Our article aimed at the similar topic but is based on the attitudes of the women themselves and their expectations in relation to this issue. We are therefore trying to quantify qualitatively based research, which is unique both in Slovakia and abroad.

Keywords: woman; family structure; Slovakia; attitudes of employment

JEL Classification: J16; J71; Z13

1 Introduction

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Despite all the global trends towards the same rights for women and men in society in general, the full equality in the labor market is still utopia even on the threshold of the third millennium. The situation worldwide varies from country to country and region to region, with global trends working for women on the one hand and religious and cultural stereotypes against women on the other. The persistent view of woman as mother and protector of the family situated employed women in a different light than employed men, even in the most developed and liberal countries. Consequently (McManus and Johnson, 2020), women entered the paid workforce in unprecedented numbers during the 20th century after centuries of “quiet revolution” of long, slow cultural shift away from the idealized separate spheres of gender traditionalism accelerated by women's rising educational attainment and career expectations; the postindustrial expansion of the service sector, stagnant wages among men, delays in marriage, declines in marital fertility, and a steep rise in single motherhood all contributed to a sharp increase in women's status as breadwinners. Despite all those movements (Wilson, 2019), women remain more likely to be in insecure employment, work varying hours or short hours, and dominate in particular sectors (occupations) which are more likely to have low pay. Gender convergence has recently slowed down and sizable gaps remain in most indicators of gender success globally. In worldwide women are still under-represented in high-income and high-status occupations (Petrongolo and Ronchi, 2020). Despite laws and educational reforms in favor of gender equality, both training courses and professions remain highly gendered. The educational system and the labor market continue to conform to stereotypes, and both girls and boys continue to base their educational choices on what society assigns their genders as areas of competence (Jaoul-Grammare, 2019). There are even visible “feminization of employment norms” characterized by continuation and change in the gendered nature of employment and its quality. The continual prioritization is given to job quantity over job quality and the slow erosion of employment rights, protections and institutions over time (Wilson, 2019).

This trend is reflected in ordinary family life of employed individuals. However, it also indirectly affects the families of non-working women, as the current social setting deepens women's insecurity in the job search process and lowers their self-confidence, which predisposes them to simpler and less valued positions. Although these often do not correspond to their abilities and circumstances, due to their lower time and intellectual demands, they create more space for women to reconcile work and family life especially if these women are mothers. This work–family balance (Greenhaus, et al., 2003) is associated with quality of life when there is substantial time, involvement, or satisfaction to distribute across roles. However, in these circumstances, quality of life is invariably highest for those who are more engaged or more satisfied in family than work, and is lowest for those who are more engaged or more satisfied in work than family. There are two ways of understanding the concept of work–family balance (Vieira, 2018): the overall subjective appraisals approach where balance is considered to be a global evaluation of the interplay between work and family and the component approach, where individual's experience of harmony and balance in their work–life situation is typically assessed with general appraisals. The importance of intellectual capital motivates organizations to search the elements of work – family balance that employees consider important regarding improvement of their career management. In this regard, an increasingly used management tool is implementation and building of “work–family culture” in organizational environment. Work–family culture (Thompson, et al., 1999) can be consider as the assumption, belief, and value regarding the extent to which an organization supports and values the integration of employees' work and family lives”. A major component of this type of culture is employees' perceptions of negative career consequences for those making use of work–family practices or devoting time to family obligations. It also includes employees' perceptions of the time demands placed on them and whether or not they are expected to prioritize work over family (Cicek, et al., 2016).
Employees who prefer to separate their professional and personal lives, exhibit the highest intrinsic motivation when they share strong Family-supportive supervisor behaviours perceptions with their employer and on the other hand their intrinsic motivation is lower when their supervisor overestimates or underestimates this concept and is minimized when both parties perceive it to be weak (Marescaux, et al. 2020). The amount of time spent at work at the expense of time spent with family is also related to the issue of work commutes. Commute is an important job attribute, which matters significantly for job satisfaction and subjective well-being in general (Clark et al., 2019), and there is also positive and robust relationship between commuting and wages which causes that women who take a larger share of caring responsibilities in the home are restricted in the work distance which has potential consequences on their job search targets and earnings (Petrongolo and Ronchi, 2020).

In 2019, there were 2,754,400 economically active inhabitants in Slovakia, of which 1,258,943 were women. The registered unemployment rate was 5%, while for men it was 4% and for women up to 6%. The number of jobseekers available was 135,517, of which as many as 74,255 were women (Eurostat, 2020). It is alarming that the inactive population, who do not even look for a job and are therefore voluntarily unemployed, has 0.4% of all men and up to 9.6% of women, which is the top in the entire EU 28. However, in the 2015 survey, 23.9% of men and 30.5% of women stated that their working hours allow them to fulfill their family and social obligations very well (Eurofound, 2020). Unfortunately, OECD data of specific gender problems of workforce such as time spend in unpaid work or share of employment in part-time jobs are not available. Nevertheless, for example enrolment rate in pre-primary education or primary school, children aged 3 to 5 year old in 2017, which was 74.9 compared with OECD average of 86% (OECD, 2020) indicate weaker engagement of young mothers in work life.

2 Methodology

Questionnaire using Google docs. online contained questions about the work life and was aimed especially at women. The sample of 361 respondents consisted of economically active age women, born from 1965, already incorporated in the labor market. According to SOSR (2019) there are 950 000 economically active women in Slovakia. They can be considered as the population size, while sample of 361 of them truly reflects the attitudes of the population with 95 % of probability and by margin of error of 5 % this sample can be described as representative. Chosen variables (Q1-Q7) from the questionnaire were tested according to the Q0 variable (family structure) using Chi-square test and their correlation was analyzed by computing the Cramer’s V.

Questionnaire research based on the eight research questions which were in the post collection phase coded as Q0 – Q7 in following design:

- Q0 - Family structure (Cohabitation with family members in the household: 1- I live alone, 2 – I live with parents (no own family), 3- I live alone with my children (incomplete family), 4 – I live with children and partner / husband (complete family), 5 – I live with partner / husband without children)
- Q1 - Education level (Highest level of education attained: 1 – primarily, 2 – secondary, 3 – first university degree, 4- second university degree, 5- third university degree)
- Q2 – Children (Number of children in parental care: 0 – 0 (childless), 1 – 1 child, 2 -2 children, 3 – 3 and more children)
- Q3 – Employment (Form of employment: 1- student, 2- ordinary employee, 3- maternity leave, 4-sole trader, 5- unemployed, 6- middle management, 7- top management, 8- disability pension)
Q4 - Motherhood as a limiting factor (Do you agree that motherhood is a limiting factor for women in terms of their ability to enter the labor market? 1- I strongly agree, 2- I rather agree, 3- I don't know, 4- I rather disagree, 5- I strongly disagree)

Q5 - Family as a barrier to employment (Have you already faced a situation where you have met the requirements for admission but the employer refused to hire you due to family responsibilities? 1-Yes, 2- Rather yes, 3-I can't judge, 4-Rather not, 5-No)

Q6 - Reconcile of work and family life (Do you have the opportunity to reconcile work and family live in your current job: 1-Yes, 2- Rather yes, 3-I can't judge, 4-Rather not, 5-No)

Q7 - Opportunity despite family (Have you ever been given the opportunity to advance to a better position despite your family commitments: 1-Yes, 2- Rather yes, 3-I can't judge, 4-Rather not, 5-No)

The Chi-square statistic is a non-parametric test to analyze group differences when the dependent variable is measured at a nominal level. It permits evaluation of both dichotomous independent variables, and of multiple group studies. The Chi-square is a significance statistic, and should be followed with a strength statistic. The Cramer’s V is the most common strength test used to test the data when a significant Chi-square result has been obtained. Limitations include its sample size requirements, difficulty of interpretation when there are large numbers of categories (20 or more) in the independent or dependent variables, and tendency of the Cramer’s V to produce relative low correlation measures, even for highly significant results (McHugh, 2013). Cramer’s V varies between 0 and 1: where V is close to 0, it shows little association between variables; and where it is close to 1, it indicates a strong association. Anything between 0 and 0.3 is weak to moderately weak; anything between 0.3 and 0.6 is moderate to moderately strong, and anything above that is strong to very strong (Clark & Foster, 2014). According to chi square test the null and alternative hypotheses are set as follows:

- H0: The rows and the columns of the table are independent.
- Ha: There is a link between the rows and the columns of the table.

P-value lower than the significance level alpha=0.05, means that one should reject the null hypothesis H0, and accept the alternative hypothesis Ha. If the observed chi-square test statistic is greater than the critical value, the null hypothesis can be rejected.

Our study aimed at the analysis of the link between structure of family (household) where Slovak woman live in and their attitudes towards its impact on their employment. In the form of interview, we aimed at quantification of their subjective opinions of qualitative impact of limits, barriers, reconciles and opportunities in their work life that they have to face in, the connection with their motherhood and responsibilities related to the care of the people with whom they live in the household.

Study is taking into consideration number of children these women have, their current employment and education level. Indeed, we do not analyze the differences in attitudes of woman with different highest level of education, number of children in parental care or form of employment. Regarding this we strongly recommend to focus on these differences in further studies, since such and similar data for Slovakia are missing. Moreover, for further research we recommend taking the availability of pre-school childcare facilities into consideration, since Kesler (2020) clarify their existence as a significant factor of maternal employment. And Cebrián, et al. (2019) illustrated them as limiting factor of improve maternal employment rates across European Union.
3 Results and Discussion

The employment of women in the labor market is in many ways hindered by their family situation. Caring for children and possibly other family members as well as home care and various house works is so time consuming for many women that it prevents them from taking up any job. If they do work, however, it is often very difficult for them to combine these responsibilities with work and find a balance between work and family life. Therefore we based our research of the perception of limiting factors and barriers in the employment of Slovak women in the labor market, on the assumption, that the primary influence in this area will be the family environment in which they live and the composition of household members, which we called the family structure.

Interviewed women live mostly with partner or husband in the household without children. In such childless partnership live 159 out of 361 of them which is 44%. On the other hand, more than quarter of them live alone with their child or children. Specifically, 96 of women (27%) live as single parent. In so called “traditional family” model live only 70 women, which is only 19%. This includes living with partner or husband and children as well. These major structures are followed by 8% of women living with parents in their house with no own family. In such “mama hotel” still live 28 of interviewed women. Last but not least, additional 2% live alone. These 8 women live single without any relatives. Described family structure was conducted as null question according which other seven research questions was statistically analyzed (Table 1).

The observed Chi-square test for the education level (Q1) is greater than the critical value, therefore the null hypothesis can be rejected and the alternative is confirmed. Therefore, we can conclude that there is a link between the family structure and the education level but conferring to Cramer’s V it’s only a weak association. This outcome is quite surprising since we expected stronger impact of educational which was conducted important (in both, positive and negative ways) in several studies aimed at lifestyle (Rindermann and Ceci, 2018; Dhanaraj and Mahambare, 2019). We believe, that reason can be connected with the fact, that woman’s educational level usually don’t affect their decisions about design of their family relations and therefore structure of members in their household and vice versa. Family structure is changing during lifetime as well as educational level and we cannot conclude that more educated woman prefers certain family structure. But, there is a highly significant link between family structure and the children (Q2) and family structure and the employment (Q3), while p-value is lower than 0.0001. For the variable of children moderately strong association and for the employment moderate association can be concluded according to Cramer’s V. These results indicate, that the number of children woman has is more important to structure of her family than her employment, which is generally comprehensible. Despite various power of associations between family structure and these three variables, we consider them as the set of primarily aspects pointed also by Wang, et al. (2013) who consider mother’s education, and the way of family function as an important aspects of family environment affecting individuals’ physical, social and emotional health.

Table 1. Test of independence between the family structure (Q0) and other variables (Q1-Q7).

|               | Q1         | Q2         | Q3         | Q4         | Q5         | Q6         | Q7         |
|---------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Chi-square    | 38.418     | 309.943    | 218.305    | 7.393      | 34.139     | 36.299     | 27.346     |
| (Observed     | value)     |            |            |            |            |            |            |
| Chi-square    | 26.296     | 21.026     | 41.337     | 26.296     | 26.296     | 26.296     | 26.296     |
| (Critical     | value)     |            |            |            |            |            |            |
| DF            | 16         | 12         | 28         | 16         | 16         | 16         | 16         |
| p-value       | 0.001      | < 0.0001   | < 0.0001   | 0.965      | 0.005      | 0.003      | 0.038      |
Motherhood as a limiting factor (Q4) was the only variable which resulted in no significance as the critical chi square value was higher than the observed one. The rows and the columns of the table are independent and the null hypothesis was confirmed. This indicates, no relationship between structure of families’ woman live in and their attitudes according limitations in terms of their ability to enter the labor market connected with their motherhood.

Comparable results were concluded for the variables Q5, Q6, Q7, where the observed chi-square value was higher than the critical value and simultaneously p-value lower than 0.05, therefore there is a link between the rows and the columns of the tables and the null hypothesis is rejected (Table 1). The strength statistic, using the Cramer’s V showed only weak association between these variables. These results point out, that Slovak woman involved in our research, are linking their decisions according to their household members with their attitudes towards barriers, reconciles and opportunities in their employment they have to face, because of their motherhood. Indeed, this link is just weak and therefore, we can say that they take these facts into consideration, but not absolutely. In connection with this, we expanded our research and in addition to relationship between family structure and other seven variables, we analyzed some relations between other variables.

Table 2. Test of independence between the children (Q2) and the employment (Q3), motherhood as a limiting factor (Q4) and family as a barrier to employment (Q5).

|       | Q3          | Q4          | Q5          |
|-------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Chi-square (Observed value) | 176.990     | 6.798       | 23.628      |
| Chi-square (Critical value) | 32.671      | 21.026      | 21.026      |
| DF    | 21          | 12          | 12          |
| p-value | < 0.0001   | 0.871       | 0.023       |
| alpha | 0.05        | 0.05        | 0.05        |
| Cramer's V | 0.404      | -           | 0.148       |

Source: own processing

To show the independence between number of children woman has in parental care, 3 variables were chosen for further testing: form of employment (Q3), agreement that motherhood is a limiting factor for women in terms of their ability to enter the labor market (Q4) and experience with situation where she have met the requirements for admission but the employer refused to hire her due to family responsibilities (Q5). Out of these, one variable (Q4) resulted as not significant. This reflects the same results for this variable (Q4-motherhood as a limiting factor) as in the previous test according to the family structure (table 1). For other two tested variables Q3 and Q4 the alternative hypothesis was confirmed and the Cramer’s V was calculated as a post hoc test. From this coefficient we can see weak association between the children (Q2) and family as a barrier to employment (Q5) but moderate association with the employment Q3. Stronger interconnection between number of children in woman parental care (since children she has in care do not have to be her own) and her employment was expected. Although a woman does not have to subjectively feel her family as an obstacle in her career, it can be assumed that she subordinates the number of children and her family to her career decisions and therefore, they are a more important factor in her decision-making. Even thought, women themselves do not always admit it, the fact remains that as mothers, they have to face wage gap when compared with childless woman. This motherhood wage gap Cukrowska-Torzewska and Matysiak, (2020) explained by the loss of mothers' human capital during career-related breaks and, to a lower extent, mothers’
choice of jobs and working conditions that correlate with lower pay. Kelley, et al. (2020) even marked this phenomenon as “the motherhood penalty”, which consists of costs associated with the demands of motherhood in professional life.

Table 3. Test of independence between the employment (Q3) and reconcile of work and family life (Q6) and the opportunity despite family (Q7).

|                  | Q6          | Q7          |
|------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Chi-square (Observed value) | 85.571      | 69.062      |
| Chi-square (Critical value)   | 41.337      | 41.337      |
| DF                | 28          | 28          |
| p-value           | < 0.0001    | < 0.0001    |
| alpha             | 0.05        | 0.05        |
| Cramer's V        | 0.243       | 0.219       |

Source: own processing

At last, employment (Q3) was connected with the reconciling of work and family life (Q6) and the opportunity to advance a better position despite woman family commitments (Q7). Their connections were tested by chi-square test, were we found high significance, while p-value was lower than 0.0001. The Cramer's V strength test showed only moderately weak association despite their high significance. Similarly as in previous case, even when woman do not point it out, their career decisions have to be subject to the situation in the family when they are mothers and mainly when children they have to care for are of pre-school age. Kesler (2020) described limitations of existing preschool programs for work-family reconciliation, but also emphasizes that limitations are more severe for some families than others. Also Cebrián, et al. (2019) found complementarities between paid employment and child care while formal and informal care are shown to be mutual substitutes, even in countries where the provision of external, formal child care is very extended and child care does not depend much on families. Additionally, they also warn, that the mere expansion of public child care is not enough to improve maternal employment rates.

4 Conclusion

Using the chi square test of independence, the only variable which resulted in no significant independence according to the family structure was motherhood as a limiting factor. The strongest association conferring to Cramer's V was described between the family structure and the children followed by the employment. Rest of the variables resulted as significant, but only weak association with the variable family structure. Moderate association was calculated in the independence between number of children woman has with the employment, while motherhood as a limiting factor resulted as not significant and family as a barrier to employment had weak association with the variable number of children. Analyzing the link between the employment and reconciling of work and family life and the opportunity despite family, we saw highly significance, but according to Cramer's V only a weak one (Fig. 1).
From these results we can conclude that number of children is the most important factor for women looking at the family structure and in their further decision about their professional life. Motherhood as a limiting factor was the only not significant variable for women in connection to their family lifestyle. We believe, that realized analysis enlighten the link between structure of family or household where Slovak woman live in and their attitudes towards its impact on their employment and in the end we would like to recommend approach of Truman (1992) who seen opportunity for young women to combine a career with a family in onus placed upon individual employers to make provisions forced by political and economic climate where market forces prevail.

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