

PREFERENCES OF CURRENT FEMALE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS – FAMILY OR CAREER?

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Abstract: The main objective of this article was to establish the attitudes of female university graduates to motherhood and family life and to what extent they prefer career to family. The survey should verify whether the prevailing opinion on the correlation between the growing number of career-oriented women and the achieved level of education as opposed to those family-oriented, is true. The participants in the survey were 218 female students in total who study at the same faculty but in different fields of study, i.e., social work and economics and management. Female social work students gave statistically significantly different answers than those studying Economics and management. There were differences in partial questions (e.g., the size of the salary which would make female students delay motherhood) verified using the Mann-Whitney Test, as well as in the overall typology. While female social work students unambiguously prefer questions focused on children and family, those studying economics and management value career more, as proved by the Wilcoxon signed-rank test. Hence, the orientation of women does not only relate to the educational level, but very significantly to the field of study as well.

Keywords: preferences of female university graduates, family-oriented, career-oriented, motherhood planning, work-family balance

1 Introduction

Since 1989, our society has gone through a number of crucial changes. One of them was the change on the labour market and related legislation, for example, the progressive opening of foreign labour markets, the possibility to do business and many others. Education went through a number of changes in the 1990s as well. New universities, both public and private, emerged, and the number of students increased dramatically. On the other hand, the number of contracted marriages and the birth-rate started to decline. The number of contracted marriages has been showing a declining trend since the 1990s. The lowest number of marriages was in 2013 (43,500). After this year, a moderate year-by-year increase in contracted marriages has been recorded (Czech Statistical Office 2016). Although the number of marriages is growing again, some young people do not plan to get married (Dudová et al., 2017).

The decision on whether to prefer career to family life is usually rather up to women. Apparently, women are more willing to give up their career for the benefit of work-family balance in this respect (Fernández-Cornejo, 2016). Work-family balance issues are currently being examined not only by scientists conducting research in different fields, but many employers as well, since they realise how much this topic affects the quality of life (Baral, & Bhargava, 2011; Goñi-Legaz, & Olló-López, 2016; Quinn, 2011). Research has proved that imbalance between work and family life results in a number of negative issues, such as a considerable inability to work in consequence of a disease or premature retirement (Agosti, 2015).

The status of women on the labour market is complicated. According to some authors, women are discriminated, their status is restricted or disputed (Čermáková, 1997; Orser, & Lesk, 2010), some draw attention to the gender pay gap (Grönlund, 2017). Other authors consider push and pull factors in this respect and distinguish whether women “leave” executive positions or are “driven out” (Kossek, & Wu, 2017).

The woman’s personality will certainly play an important role, as well as her values, attitudes and preferences. Hakim (2000) distinguishes three basic types of women: those family-oriented (about 20%), career-oriented (approx. 20 % as well) and adaptive (60 %) representing the largest group. Family-oriented women usually prioritise their children and family life. Career-driven women usually have no children, their main priority is their job or important activities in the public sector or other areas

(politics, sports, arts, etc.). Adaptive women want to combine work and family.

Weidnerová and Matějů (2015) conducted an extensive survey which concluded that the higher the education achieved, the weaker the women’s orientation towards family life and household. Hence, with higher education grows work career orientation.

The statistics in the Czech Republic confirm that the proportion of women studying at universities is growing. Currently, female university graduates represent more than half of students at most universities. In 2016, total of 67,363 students graduated from public universities, of whom 40,027 were women. The biggest number of students graduated from Charles University in Prague and Masaryk University in Brno. These universities feature a significantly prevailing number of women as to the graduates (ČSÚ, 2017). This article verified whether the above-stated typology of women (i.e., career-oriented as opposed to family-oriented women) can be generally applied based on specified socio-economic features, in this specific case, considering the educational level.

2 Methodology

The purpose of this article was to identify the differences in attitudes of female university graduates to motherhood and family with respect to the field of study. A written questionnaire was selected as a research method. The questionnaire contained 22 closed and open questions. 218 female students at the Faculty of Social and Economic Studies of UJEP in Ústí nad Labem, doing either the Social work field of study (106) or Economics and management (112), participated in the survey. Quota sampling was selected to collect data, the first quota being gender – a respondent had to be female, and the second one – she had to be a full-time student at the Faculty of Social and Economic Studies (FSE) of UJEP in the specified fields of study. Data were collected from November 2017 to January 2018. The rate of return was 100% (none of the contacted women refused to respond).

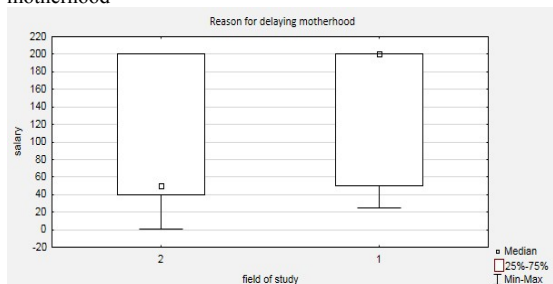
The Statistica 13 and Microsoft Excel programmes were used for data processing. The following statistical procedures were used as well: X² test of independence, paired two-sample t-test for likelihood, Mann-Whitney test, Kruskal-Wallis test, Wilcoxon pair test.

3 Results

As mentioned in the introduction, some young women tend to delay motherhood to a higher age. The first research question looked into how high their net monthly salary would have to be to follow their career path and delay setting up a family. Respondents could either show the size of the monthly salary or select the available answers: no size of salary would make me delay motherhood, or any size would make me delay motherhood. The answer “any size would make me delay motherhood” was matched with rating 1 on the number line, and rating 200 was matched with the answer “no size would make me delay motherhood”, since the highest selected salary was 100 (thousand CZK). Six responses were disqualified due to an missing answer to the question. The following box-plot shows these ordinal data (box-plot) No. 1.

It is obvious from Chart 1 that female social work students value setting up a family more. The size of salary which would make them delay setting up a family is higher as to the minimum, lower quartile and the median. 50 % of female social work students state that no salary (in chart 200) would make them delay motherhood. 50 % female of economics and management students would delay setting up a family due to a salary up to CZK 50 thousand.

Chart 1 Size of salary which could be a reason for delaying motherhood



Source: own

The Mann-Whitney test confirmed the differences in the division of both groups of female students indifferent fields of study. Results are shown in the Table 1.

Table 1 Differences in attitudes to delaying motherhood between female social work and economics and management students

Mann-Whitney U Test						
Rank Sum Group 1	Rank Sum Group 2	U	Z	p-value	Z adjusted	p-value
9638.500	12939.50	3752.50	4.17239	0.000030	4.41820	0.000010

Source: own

The test confirmed that establishing a family is more important for female social Work students than for those studying Economics. These would consider delaying setting up a family with a far lower salary than female social work students.

The answer “no size of salary would make me delay setting up a family” was marked by 67 female social work students of 104. Only 33 female economics students marked this question of the total number of 108 female students. To validate whether the rate of female social work students is statistically significantly higher than in female economics students, statistical testing was used. Null hypothesis H0 was tested: $\pi_1 = \pi_2$ as opposed to alternative hypothesis H0: $\pi_1 > \pi_2$. π_1 marks the rate of female SW students who would not want to delay motherhood due to any size of salary. Rate π_2 refers to the rate of female economics students who do not want to delay motherhood due to any size of salary. The test criterion value is 5.35. It will exceed the critical value of 1.65 (the value of the 95% quantile of the standardized normal distribution) and the null hypothesis on equality of both parts is rejected. The percentage of female SW students who would never delay motherhood due to any size of salary is statistically significantly higher than female students of economics and management.

Respondents were asked how many children they want to have. As Table 2 shows, female students want to have two children most frequently. Three or more children were shown more by female social work students. There was also a significant number of female economics and management students who declare they will not have any children (nearly a quarter).

Table 2 Number of children wanted

Line descriptions	0	1	2	3 or more	I have never thought about it	I already have children	Total sum
Social work	8	10	41	16	13	18	106
Economics and management	41	10	37	10	10	4	112
Total sum	49	20	78	26	23	22	218

Source: own

Respondents were also asked whether they would follow their career path before maternity leave. Only students who have no children were asked to answer the question. There were 191 female students. Of this number, there were 83 female social

work and 108 economics and management students. Students answered using a four-point scale- strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree. The chi-squared test of good concordance was used to verify whether the answers on this scale depend on the selected field of study. The p-value in this test was $p = 4.70371E-09$, so the independence was rejected. The median concordance of both groups was tested using the Kruskal-Wallis test due to the ordinal answers to the question. Results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3 Differences in attitudes to preferring career to motherhood between female social work and economics and management students

Kruskal-Wallis ANOVA by Ranks; Kruskal-Wallis test: $H(1, N=191) = 34.14132, p = 0.0000$			
Career	Valid n	Sum of ranks	Mean Rank
Social work	83	5923.50	71.3675
Economics and management	108	12412.50	114.9306

Source: own

As mentioned in Methodology, a questionnaire was selected for written interviews. It contained 22 questions in total. Some of them were selected to measure career preferences or family preferences. The questions were:

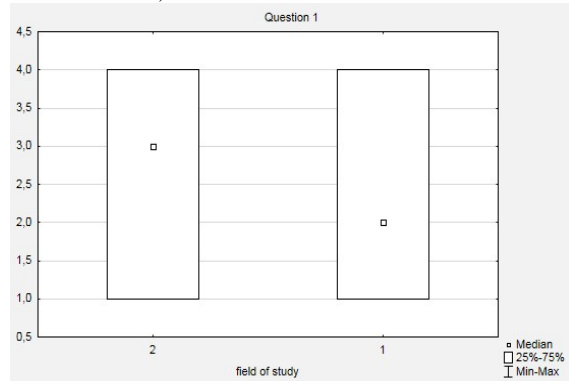
1. I do not want to have any children, I prefer success at work.
2. I am prepared to delay motherhood due to my career (up to the risky age of 35).
3. My life without children would have no purpose.
4. Delaying motherhood to a higher age (more than 35) is risky.
5. I think work and family life can be joined together.
6. Having children is our mission.
7. I chose a field of study where I expect career growth.
8. I would be ready to have an abortion due to my career.
9. Career comes first (build the position, salary, etc.) then family.
10. Women should take the longest possible maternity leave in order to bring up children properly.

Students could use the scale with the answers - strongly disagree (coded 1), disagree (coded 2), agree (coded 3), strongly agree (coded 4) or they could select an answer - I have not considered such a question or "I already have children". Students who had not considered the question or those who had already had children were disqualified from the selection group for further data processing. Once the selection group had been filtered according to the described criteria, 144 respondents were left, of which 62 were social work students and 82 economics and management students.

The above-stated questions were divided into two groups. Questions 1,2,8,10 and 11 were those where one can expect answers in the positive spectrum given by students prioritising career. On the other hand, questions 4,5,6,7, and 12 can be expected to be positively answered by students who find family more important than building their professional career.

It is obvious from Chart 2 that the median of answers is 2 in female social work students (group 1), hence, 50 % of female students chose “disagree”. On the other hand, female economics students (group 2) answered in 50 % that maximum “agree”.

Chart 2 Comparison of career preferences in female social work students and female economics and management students (answer to question "I do not want to have any children, I prefer success at work.")



Source: own

To compare the distribution of all the questions answered by respondents of both fields of study, the Mann-Whitney test was chosen again. Its null hypothesis says that there is no statistically significant difference in distribution of both groups, against the alternative hypothesis, the adoption of which confirms the difference of distribution of both groups.

Table 4 Comparison of groups of female social work and economics and management students in all mentioned questions.

Question number	U	Z	p-value	Zadjusted	p-value
1.	824.0000	6.929479	0.000000	7.366500	0.000000
2	872.5000	6.733800	0.000000	7.047196	0.000000
4	1036.000	-6.07414	0.000000	-6.32377	0.000000
5.	1754.000	-3.17727	0.001487	-3.44167	0.000578
6.	1133.000	-5.68278	0.000000	-5.95167	0.000000
7.	1541.000	-4.03665	0.000054	-4.18577	0.000028
8.	747.0000	7.240146	0.000000	7.598166	0.000000
10.	1602.000	3.790536	0.000150	4.156436	0.000032
11.	982.0000	6.292007	0.000000	6.554525	0.000000
12.	1529.000	-4.08506	0.000044	-4.33100	0.000015

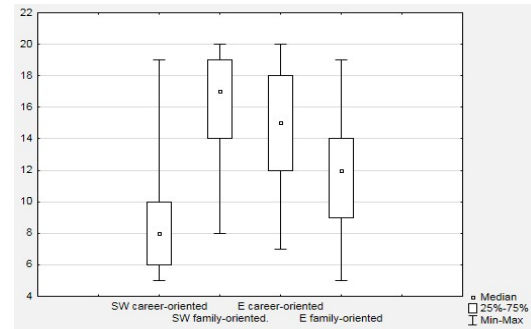
Source: own

The differences in distribution in both groups in all mentioned questions were confirmed based on the results. Female social work students gave statistically significantly different answers to all questions than those studying economics and management.

After that, coded career-focused answers (questions 1, 2, 8, 10 and 11) were added. Answers to other family-oriented questions were then added as well. These two values were marked as the "career score" and "family score". There were 5 questions in each group, so the lowest value of the sum could be from 5 to maximum 20. Box-plot charts for both groups and in both groups of questions are shown in the following chart.

It is obvious from Chart 3 that there are differences between individual groups. Social work students show median of 8, which reflects the fact that 50 % of students ranked the career-oriented questions with rather lower values (i.e., in the incongruous part of the spectrum). The median in the group of family-oriented questions is much higher and shows that social work students usually gave positive answers to these questions, as opposed to economics and management students shown in Chart 3. However, the differences are not so significant here.

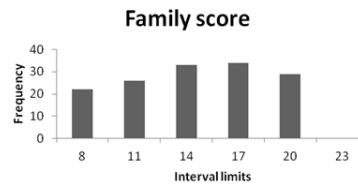
Chart 3 Comparison of the importance of career and family in female students of different fields of study



Source: own

The following charts show both values: the career score and family score. Before testing the differences in both groups, it was necessary to identify whether these values have normal distribution. Histograms of both values are shown in the following charts.

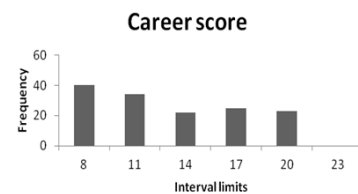
Chart 4 Histogram of the family score value



Source: own

As both charts show (i.e., charts 4 and 5), neither value has normal distribution and to test existing differences related to both groups of questions in each field of study we had to use the non-parametric pairs signed test of congruence of two medians.

Chart 5 Histogram of the career score value



Source: own

In each field of study, the Wilcoxon pairs signed test verified whether these differences in answers to the questions in the two groups (questions related to career and those related to establishing a family) are statistically significant.

The test results confirmed that there is a statistically significant difference in the answers to both groups of questions in both fields of study (i.e., questions related to career as opposed to questions prioritising establishing a family). Social work students gave lower coded answers to career-related questions more frequently, which shows disagreement, and their answers to family-related questions showed higher codes more frequently, i.e., agreement. Economics and management students used higher-coded answers to the career-related questions more frequently, which shows agreement, whereas their answers to the family-related questions showed disagreement more frequently.

Table 5 Verification of differences between both groups of questions in the fields of study

Career-related&family-related questions	Wilcoxon Matched Pairs Test		
	T	Z	p-value
Social work	102.0000	6.131183	0.000000
Economics and management	823.0000	3.699512	0.000216

Source: own

Generally, it was established that in all 10 specified questions, the answers of SW and economics students show a statistically significant difference. A statistically significant difference in female students of both fields of study in the assessment of the two groups of questions was also established, i.e., the group of questions focused on career preferences and family-related questions.

4 Discussion

Weidnerová and Matějů (2015) investigated whether the type of women related to their career or family preferences depends on education. They concluded that about 11% of female university graduates are family-oriented (the so-called family type), 28 % are career-oriented and 61 % represent the adaptive type. Women were divided into the above-mentioned types according to their attitude to the statement "Women should be prepared to reduce their paid work due to family". Females who gave positive answers were allocated to the group oriented towards household and family and those oriented towards job and career were defined by strong disagreement with the statement. Other women were allocated to the adaptive category. It seems logical that with higher completed education the number of women oriented towards career grows, while the number of family and household-oriented women declines (Hakim, 2006).

A group of questions was developed within the investigation. One half of the questions was focused on career preferences, the other half on family preferences. One of the questions was formulated very similarly as in the research of Weidnerová and Matějů (2015), i.e. "I do not want to have any children, I prefer success at work". As the results showed, the answers of the female social work students to the question showed a statistically significant difference compared to the female economics and management students. The Mann-Whitney Test verified the statistical difference in all ten questions of the test. Hence, it was proved that it is impossible to state unambiguously that female university graduates prefer career to establishing a family. As the results show, there are statistically significant differences between the attitudes and preferences of female university graduates, depending on their field of study.

Apparently, cultural aspects will also play an important role, however, similar issues of the work-family balance and the status of women on the labour market is currently being dealt with worldwide (Amin, Arshad, & Ghani, 2017; Chen, Powell, & Cui, 2014; Chouat et al., 2013; Jin, Ford, & Chen, 2013; Faiz, Faiz, & Ahmer, 2016). There are differences in individual countries in the representation of individual types of women. The biggest number of family-oriented women is in Turkey (around 50 %), unlike in northern countries (less than 5 %). The Czech Republic has about 25% of women oriented towards family. Turkey also has the smallest number of women oriented towards career (less than 4 %), while career-oriented females occur significantly more frequently in northern countries (30 – 50 %). There are about 14% of career-oriented women in the Czech Republic (Weidnerová, Matějů, 2015).

In the early 1990s, five US universities conducted a survey looking into the expectations of young people related to their career, motherhood and marriage. 200 students formed a survey group regardless of gender and race. 16 years later, the same respondents were contacted again and asked to answer the questions related to their work career and family. The return rate of the questionnaire was nearly 78 %. Three groups were created: Have It All (mothers working full-time); traditional (mothers working part-time or not working at all) and only working women (no children, working full-time). Educational level had no influence on being integrated into any group (Hoffnung, & Williams, 2013).

Young people appreciate the importance of the decision to have children and they consider the consequences, particularly in the context of their work career (Berdahl, & Moon, 2013; Reynolds, & Johnson, 2012). Having children and how many is usually a question of mutual agreement. The ideal number of children

stated by the respondents is two. It was established that should a family decide to have a third child, it is usually a wish and preference of the woman (Jennings, & Pierotti, 2016). It was established in this investigation that the female social work students more often want to have 3 or more children.

Combining work and household duties is often appreciated as a conflicting situation. Similarly, social roles are in conflict as well (Protas, & Hyland, 2011), whereas these conflicts can often affect physical health (Boz, Martínez-Corts & Munduate, 2016). Success in a work career is positively influenced by the spouse's support (Amin, Arshad, & Ghani, 2017).

Respondents oriented towards family showed a positive relationship to satisfaction in life. No gender or age differences were found in this segment (Hirschi et al., 2016).

5 Conclusion

The main objective of this article was to establish the attitudes of female university graduates to motherhood and family life and to which extent they prefer career to family. This objective linked to surveys which concluded that the higher the achieved educational level, the greater the number of women oriented towards career than those oriented towards family and household.

In the question of what would their net monthly salary have to be to delay setting up a family, the female social work students gave statistically significantly different answers than female economics and management students. The percentage of female SW students who would never delay motherhood due to any size of salary is statistically significantly higher than in female students of economics and management.

The Mann-Whitney test proved that there is a statistically significant difference in students' preferences depending on the field of study. Female social work students significantly prefer family, while female economics and management students prefer career. The same finding was confirmed by the Wilcoxon signed-rank test comparing the importance of career or family. Female social work students find questions related to children and family very important and they mark questions related to professional career as less important. Female economics and management students show quite opposite preferences – profession and career questions were important for them, while questions related to children and family are ranked as less important.

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Primary Paper Section: A

Secondary Paper Section: AE, AN