

Theses of doctoral (PhD) dissertation

**„Double attachment” – from labour market career to
familiariasm**

Job attitude and integration of mothers with young children

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1. Objectives and preliminaries of the dissertation

In Hungary, the employment situation is quite unfavourable. The employment rates for both men and women lag behind the European Member States. Studying gender differences in the labour market, it can be seen that women are in a worse situation than men. In 2011, there was a gap of 11.8 % between the employment rates for women and men. Before the change of the system, the employment rate for women was one of the highest in Europe, mainly due to the complete employment. However, this rate has fallen and is below the average of the European Union State Members (Frey 2001). The reasons for the unfavourable indices for men can be explained by labour market causes and the high number of men who get pension-like benefit, or are inactive due to other causes. In the case of women, mainly mothers with young children contribute to the main reason for the low activity rate (Blaskó 2009).

Today, the greatest challenge for women is the decision to make to choose between children and work. Experts of the field are convinced that women should not be forced but rather be provided with the chance to make individual decisions or to rely on their inner drive when they set priorities in their carrier; whether they devote themselves to work or family, or plan to balance between them. Since the beginning of dual-salary family pattern, women are less likely to wish to fulfil only the roles of a mother and wife, while the exclusive role of a working woman is unacceptable for many of them. The most common career is the so-called “double career”, with either a financial pressure or the desire of self-realization, sometimes both of them in the background (Spéder 2001; Koncz 2006).

Our topic is based on this relatively new phenomenon, mainly because the rise in women’s employment has special importance both in Hungary and the European Union. What is more, women’s employment is connected to how to balance between children, family duties and work. National and international data also justify to necessity of our study, as the number of births has reached a

negative record which has not been seen for 135 years in Hungary. Though, it is closely connected to the conflict of wanting to have children and being in the labour market.

The desire for a full life has been in the spotlight for a few decades in developed market economies. In line with one of its aspects the importance of family life, gainful employment and the eagerness to have a harmonious family life also enhanced. One of the most important aspects of the EU's employment strategy is to harmonise the multiple role of women. Overburden due to conflicts between work and family life, and little free time is emphatically displayed among women with young children, which might as well withhold them from participating in training courses and creating new contacts (Koncz 2008).

The topic of our research is the labour market activity of women with young children and their (re)integration into the labour market. In order to set the objectives which are to reveal and present the factors and background variables affecting the labour market integration of women with young children, this dissertation is based on the theory. It is examined how the affected ones judge their own situation and chances in the labour market. During the analytical work answers are being sought to the questions when mothers with young children are planning to go back to work following the maternal leave, and what factors affect their decision.

The theoretical framework of this dissertation and the research itself apply multidisciplinary approaches, given the topic's implications of law, anthropology, biology, psychology, pedagogy, economics and sociology. The theoretical framework is primarily formed by the theories, models and theses of economics and sociology – sociology of family and sociology of education. Education sciences like sociology of education have adapted and developed several economic theories such as human capita and social capita, as well as sociological theories like cultural capita. Thus, sociology of education can use them according to its own approach and criteria.

2. Methods applied

Data collection of our empirical study was carried out in Szabolcs Szatmár Bereg County by taking data personally with 450 mothers of very young children up to 7 years of age the most. The interviews were taken in the health visitor's districts in 2010. The integration attitude of women in the sample towards labour market was examined in two sub-groups; mothers who were still on maternal leave at the time of the interview, and who already started to work after the maternal leave. By doing so it was possible to compare the two sub-groups. Since the content of the questionnaires was the same in both of the cases, it became possible to create a uniform database, in which the two sub-groups formed a uniform sample.

2.1. Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were established on the basis of theory and figures of other empirical studies:

1. On the basis of demographic researches it is expected that the higher number of children significantly restricts or even irrevocably withholds women's reintegration into the labour market. This hypothesis is built mainly on the researches of Bukodi and Róbert (1999); Frey (2002); Kapitány and Spéder (2007, 2009); Plantenga and Remery (2005).
2. Regarding that workplace means safety, it is expected that women who held a job before their child was born are able to integrate into the labour market with no difficulties due to their stronger labour market attachment. They are expected to stay longer on maternal leave, or take the whole term of maternal leave. This hypothesis takes into account the deductions of Szűcs (2005); Bálint and Köllő (2008).

3. Koltai (1999), Török (2006) and Szűcs (2005) state that participating in a training course increases chances in the labour market. According to Bukodi (2005) school attainment is likely to affect women's labour market chances and risks to a larger extent than men's. It is expected that women participating in a training course during the maternal leave will be less worried when they restart work, and their aim with the training is to find a job more suitable to the mothers' changed circumstances. Within the whole sample, the rate of those who change jobs is supposed to be higher among mothers' who have participated in a training course.
4. The fourth hypothesis is derived from the "partner bonus" model by Kapitány and Spéder (2009). Applying this model it is supposed that the presence of a husband/spouse as well as his labour market position plays an important part in mothers' decision when to restart work. If there is a husband/spouse who decreases the risk of income shortfall due to childbirth, then women who have a husband/spouse holding a job tend to postpone returning to work. Besides marital status and the partner's economic activities, school attainment of both the respondent and her partner was also thought to be a variable. On the basis of cultural homogeneity hypothesis a well-qualified husband's wife, who presumably also has high school attainment, is more likely to postpone her gainful employment for some time right after the childbirth; "*the earlier accumulated career capita inspires people to return to the labour market*" (Bukodi and Róbert 1999:206) says the theory of human capita.

5. On the basis of women's career models by Koncz (2006) and Hakim (2000) a structural correspondence is expected to be between social status and labour market position, as well as "private roles" and "family career", and those with lower status prefer "private role" and "family career", while those with a higher status prefer "work career".
6. Coleman (1989) and Becker (1981) concluded that one of the forms of social capita, the investment within the family can be reflected in the quantity of time spent with the child. Thus we examined how much time is spent with the child during the maternal leave, how big the time investment was which has a significant role in accumulating social capita. It is supposed that women who do not take the whole term of maternal leave wish to spend the most possible time with their children during this period.

3. Outcomes

The most important outcome of our research is that the planned or actually realized dates of starting work again differ in the case of women who are still on maternal leave with their child and that of women who have already restarted work. The most significant difference between the planned and actually realized dates is that those who are still on maternal leave are planning to restart work a half year later on average than those who have already started it. Relying on the former group's opinion and the explaining background variables it can be said that when the questionnaires were taken the time to answer this question did not arrive, mainly because of the young age of children. The decision on the date of restart work seems to be very far, which also creates an idealized circumstance. There is no real situation to be considered, if yes, it is rather one-sided, putting child care in the foreground. Outer factors like finding a place for

the child while mothers work, or the pressure generated by demand in the labour market, or the low amount of maternal care in its third year do not cause any problems in this early phase of motherhood. Therefore these factors have no influence on the labour market integration plans of the mothers; the family life-cycle effect is present.

When examining the number of children and the starting date of returning to work a significant connection can be seen. Our hypothesis is supported in the case of the two sub-groups; the number of children restricts women reintegration into labour market, and the more children are being brought up in a family, the later the mother can return to work. As we have experienced when there is more than one under school-aged child in a family, the mother takes this fact into consideration, as she can pay more attention to the other under school-aged children while she is on maternal leave with the youngest one. Therefore the payback of being at home is manifested in the positive impact of spending extra time with the other children.

The outcomes referring to the connection of the child's age and the date of returning to work support our hypothesis in both sub-groups. When mothers are considering the date of returning to the labour market, two-year-old or even younger children notably influence the planned and realized dates. Having a child of 0-2 years of age means that the time spent at home is lengthened, while having a child above 2 years of age strengthens the readiness to return to work.

The hypothesis that if a workplace means safety, then mothers will stay longer on maternal leave is not supported; in both groups those who work as civil or public servants return to their work the earliest. As we have experienced, the underlying reason is the mothers' school attainment and not the sector they belong to, since the majority of those who have a degree or finished secondary school work in the public sphere, workplaces that we consider safe. The experienced connection justifies the thesis referring to the theories of human capita.

Participating in training courses do not significantly modify the planned and realized dates of returning to work in either of the samples. It can be said that participating in training courses during maternal leave cannot foretell the date of returning to work. However, learning prepares mothers for taking up paid jobs. As we have experienced, when the tuition fee is paid by the state it strongly motivates mothers' willingness to learn. Half of the respondents would not mind learning if training courses were free or at discount price for mothers with young children.

The hypothesis on "partner bonus" effect is supported but only in the case of mothers still on maternal leave. Married mothers are planning to return to work at the latest time, while those living in a common-law relationship are planning it a bit earlier. The earliest date is given by single or divorced mothers. There is no connection between working mothers' labour market integration and their marital status, a kind of co-movement can be observed among women who belong to different family patterns.

Financial activities of fathers do not give an explanation for setting the date of returning to work. In contrast, school attainment does have a significant role in it. When fathers have higher school attainment it leads to an earlier return to work in the case of mothers still on maternal leave and who already at work. So the hypothesis that having a spouse with high human capita will postpone the date of mother's returning to work is not justified.

Fathers' role in household chores is significant, though it shows a difference in the two sub-groups. A number of respondents who cannot rely on their partner's help are planning the earliest return to work. On the contrary, from the group of working mothers those whose partners assured them about assistance were the ones who returned to work at the earliest. It implies that the presence of a helper provides the mother with a balanced, problem-free period to be spent at home. Regarding the working mothers, the helper provides a safe background which makes it possible for the mother to find balance between

family and career, thus there is no need to postpone the date of returning to the labour market. All these support Coleman's theory on social capita.

The choice between different career models is examined along the structural endowment of women, since our survey on value preferences has shown that qualified mothers are less likely to insist on traditional gender roles, than those with low school attainment. Regarding the mothers still on maternal leave, in line with our hypothesis, the least qualified ones are planning to return to work at the latest while women with a degree intend to return at the earliest. The picture is more nuanced in the case of mothers already working, since the ones who return to work at the earliest are mothers with finished secondary school. It might be explained by material reasons because the financial risks of having a baby fall heavily on them, and the low amount of the maternal leave in its third year does not appeal to them. For mothers with finished secondary school the earlier return to work is a kind of profit sacrifice, because rational and financial reasoning triggers the decision on not taking the full term of maternal leave. It is in contrast with the economics theory of family; how different capita and goods are shared and exchanged when the man puts all his effort into his role in the labour market ensuring by this the financial background for his family. Meanwhile the woman devotes her energy and resources to domestic activities, runs the house and creates family cohesion. (Bukodi and Róbert).

Our outcomes support the theory of social capita; an individual's decisions are not only affected by the resources of his/her but rather his/her immediate surroundings such as status parameters of husband/spouse or sharing tasks within the family. In this case we are talking about a close social capita, which can be described with strong bonds and relations within the family.

Mothers with the lowest school attainment are most likely to stay at home with the child for even more than three years, while the rate for mothers with finished secondary school or degree of higher education is not prevalent in this case. The reason why mothers with low school attainment are planning to return

to work at the latest is the very thin interstice between the unfavourable wage in the labour market and the amount of maternal leave, in addition the mothers' traditional values amplifies the argument to stay at home for a long time. It has become obvious that mothers with small human capita tend to stay away from the labour market for a longer time, while mothers with higher school attainment plan to return to labour market earlier. However, in our sample, the dynamics of return of working mothers with finished secondary school attainment or a degree of higher education contradicts research outcomes of this field, since mothers with secondary school attainment return to work at the earliest. A double-faced feature is present in the attitude of mothers with a degree. On the one hand the early return of highly qualified mothers supports the reasoning of human capita theories; the career suspension of mothers with more favourable labour market attachment is likely to yield significant loss in human capita. The longer the suspension the bigger the loss is. On the other hand, a part of these mothers, a thin slice of them though, took the advantage of full term maternal leave. To find the explanation it is worth examining the notion of homogamy. According to homogamy, individuals in a marriage have similar human capita, therefore in families which possess this resource the mothers' return to the labour market does not seem an imperative.

The effect of social capita within the family has been examined through time investment in children, the merit of worry for them and how tasks are shared between the partners. Figures have shown that both mothers still on maternal leave and mothers already at work have invested much time into the social capita of their children when they spend time quality with them before going back to work, in addition rarely have they relied on someone's help to look after the child or placed them in a crèche. It can be proved that the merit of worry about the child definitely has an influence on the timing to restart work. The more worried the mothers are concerning their capability to spend enough

time with the child the later they postpone the date of their integration into the labour market. The presence of a helper may soothe the merit of anxiety, though.

4. Summary

In conclusion we can say that the examined sub-groups basically preferred being exclusively a mother for all the three years, which is also reflected in their answers to the ideal length of maternal leave in the questionnaire. They give voice to their opinion that staying at home with the child for three years will make a profit concerning the child's healthy development, a good and long-term mother and child relationship. Accepting the three-year maternal leave is a result of strong, traditional social history, a cultural imprint, in which the identification with the expected behaviour can also be seen. However, three quarters of mothers who already work and almost half of the mothers who are still on maternal leave went back or were planning to go back to work before the child turned on three. This implies that mothers' ideas on the planned date of returning to the labour market have restrictions.

Our figures have shown that the length of maternal leave that a mother can take is hindered or promoted by economic, social and human capita, which tailor the strategy of when and how to integrate into the labour market. The differences between the planned and realized dates of restarting work is mainly due to the influential power of the above mentioned types of capita, since in the case of mothers already working the end of a process was seen, while in the case of mothers still on maternal leave these factors have not affected their choice yet, they are still in the process.

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