

**FEMALE MANAGEMENT – BETWEEN MOTHERHOOD AND CAREER****Iulian APOSTU***Institute of Sociology, Romanian Academy,  
iulian@insoc.com***Abstract**

*The current data about the marital relations indicate with a substantial share in all the existing statistics that the partners are assessed with modern structures. They speak of equality, fairness as regarding the tasks, the gender attitudes and the functional system. However, the same social data reveals that between the declaration and the practical fact there are often obvious differences.*

*The same relevance and has the historical data indicating that in 1866 Romania, the Constitution of the Kingdom attested the equal rights of all Romanians, though, from the legal authentication of this law until the assimilation of the social equity a lot of time has passed. However, the social inequities are still visible in each social structure and the idea of gender equity melts into a set of roles that show, of course, in a diminished form, functional elements of a traditional marriage. Today, most times, the woman's desire to assert socially and professionally has a cost – the role overcrowding. Women take care about their career but do not neglect the classic set of spousal role, which often places them in a position to choose between career and family. Moreover, the childbirth becomes an even greater challenge as the decision for the pregnancy must be accompanied by a decision for a career break. This is also becoming a challenge in itself given that the child dependency on their mother and the career break make the reintegration of women in the professional environment increasingly difficult.*

*Based on a qualitative analysis, the study aims to analyze how women manage to build their own balance between career and family by organizing the functional way of restructuring family activities in relation to their career. Also, it aims to identify the impact that the women's return to work after the maternity leave produces upon the family.*

**Key words:** *role equity, role inequity, marriage functionality, woman career, maternity..*

**JEL Classification:** *D1, J12, J13*

**I. THE CAREER WOMAN AND THE CAREER IMPACT UPON THE FAMILY LIFE**

For Romania, the process of industrialization, where we can see "cognitive dimension" (Eși, Nedelea, 2014, 74-77) was the first step towards the autonomy of women. The possibility of work outside the family group, the possibility of obtaining its own resources has provided a minimum of women's autonomy that she needed for her individual development. Also, a wider access for women to the labor market has visibly contributed to the affirmation and generalization of the concept of career women in society. Thus, a true evolution and transition of women from traditional specific responsibilities to rebuild the female status in socio-professional terms was produced, which helped to redefine feminine roles and tasks. (Tudose, 2005, p.146).

This initiative is really the first step towards what would later become the enhanced access of women in the public sphere and their leaving them home sphere. However, the career brings both advantages and disadvantages to women because, in itself, for a woman the career doesn't mean meant balancing the role structure but the career's price consists of the role overcrowding. In addition to the disadvantages easily identified, the possibility of a professional career can also bring advantages to women. In this regard, the inconvenience of the lack of appreciation and reward for the housewives in the traditional family will be largely suppressed by emphasizing the women's paid work of and by their increasingly obvious social promotion. (Juravle, Sasu & Bubăscu, 2015). However, the near future regarding the role and position of women within the family will further underline the superiority of women within the home sphere, although this time a new professional statute for them is added. (Lipovetsky, 2000, p. 203).

Women's empowerment has led to some major effects upon the family (Juravle, Sasu & Spătaru, 2016). The main effect of women's involvement in activities outside their families and the modernizing thereof is that of reducing the number of children due to a decreased fertility through contraception women resort to when a baby is acknowledged as being a hindrance to their professional development (Fukuyama, 2002, p.123). Although the impact that the professional career on brings the childbirth is predominantly negative, however the woman does not repress her motherhood but often chooses the strategy to reduce the number of children or delaying birth until a certain level of confirmation in her career.

In this respect, the outlining of the working life can also have many benefits, both on the family life and on the woman herself – achieving higher incomes enables women better conditions for the development of a pregnancy regarding the medical monitoring, the housing quality, of the environment of psycho-physical growth and development of the mother and the child, all of which implicitly lead to increased opportunities in the reorganization of life after birth, greater autonomy in relation to women's needs, enabling them to detach from the material constraints or the constraints specific to the traditional society. (Păunescu, 2012, pp. 71).

Another instrumental issue, the career formation does not only changes the women's standpoint about having or not having children, but can anticipate a deficit mother-child relationship caused by the lack of time, the flawed ordering of priorities, situations that may underlie a poor socialization. (Ciupercă, 2000, pp.153).

## II. FEMALE CAREER VERSUS MOTHERHOOD

Although the attitude towards the paid work of women has acquired positive values and legitimacy, assuming the professional status alongside the household status is not convenient. The women's choice to strike a balance between family life and professional life, as well as the desire to be competitive are strongly influenced by the cognitive dissonance process, which implies a discrepancy of between the states that women must manifest in the workplace and their inner mental and emotional state (Iluț 2005, pp.140), which may create a conflict of principles regarding work and family life.

Motherhood involves a set of specific roles and a range of emotions and feelings associated with it which places the woman at the intersection of two conditions – the mother and the career woman. Oscillating between emotional and relational the decision to return to work is not convenient neither biologically nor in terms of socialization, or of specific biological conditionings and definitely not in terms of emotional costs. Also in order to study the social problems the fact that the decision to return to work after childbirth is strongly influenced by factors such as "poverty, the costs of childcare, the desire to continue breastfeeding the child and the feelings of anxiety and guilt with regard to leaving the child in the care of other persons or formal institutions" should not be ignored (Zhang, 2008, pp. 2).

The results of social studies reinforce the above statement by the statistics obtained, namely, for the decision not to return to work, 56% of respondents cited as the reason the refusing to call on foreign sources for the child care, 45% of the respondent argued that another reason is the unavailability of required number of hours to fulfill family responsibilities and 20% said that the lack of policies to facilitate breastfeeding is another main reason. (Nowak et al, 2013 pp.125).

Although the women's aspirations acquire a new interpretation and the childbirth is more programmed and conditioned at the same time by the mother's professional goals, the reluctance to return to work after childbirth points out that women choose rather the association with motherhood than with the career but the financial needs, those related to material security also come with their own material imperative regarding the decision to return to work. They want more and more to achieve the ideal image of the contemporary woman, resulting in the intention of women and also from the expectations of the traditional society concerning the fact that "the woman should be a super housewife, a super mother, a super employee and a super wife". (Ciupercă, 2005, pp. 41).

It is certain that some mothers and even career women can not give up so easily to the old female values and their mother role, which is why most mothers still assume an important part of the responsibilities that primarily relate to children and housework, which means that women try to balance both qualitatively and quantitatively different types of tasks. (White, 1999 pp.173). The career women know their duties in relation to children's needs, which entail the women's desire to redirect their time and energy to care for their own children. At EU level, the overlapping of the domestic responsibilities with the time dedicated to work and in particular the time that women give to the childcare activity appears to be an important issue at the social level, because 51% of women dedicate significant childcare time and spend an average of 30 hours per week for this typology of family responsibilities (Leovaridis, Nicolăescu, 2011, pp. 113).

The tendency to assume the two sets of roles leads to a paradox in the feminine existence, not only from the inability of women to organize the two worlds effectively, but the rapid ascension of women in the labor market led to social transformation and implicitly to "de-traditionalizing" of the family structure (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002 apud Cantera, 2009, pp. 466). As both action dimensions presupposes resources of time and energy, and these are limited for the professional woman, most often, occurs the tendency, intentional or not, to excel in one of the two areas and the other to support certain shortcomings in terms of efficiency. As an extreme, abandoning an area of two equals to its absence in the women's life, which entails the increase of their sense of un-fulfillment, either professionally, personally or in terms of family (Ciursă, A., Lența, O., 2013, p. 367

The organization of the professional life and the personal roles, where we can see ethical standards (Posteucă, 2015, pp.79-88) is closely linked to the career theory whose premises points out that the job satisfaction is strongly influenced by the way in which the person's individual characteristics are effectively

combined with the outer variables of the individual. (Super, 1953, pp. 185-190, apud Grant-Vallone and Ensher, 2010, pp.332). In agreement with the theory set out above the difficulties faced by women trying to balance work life and family life and to cope with the role overcrowding result in distortions of the personal life can thus be explained. This occurs mostly because one of the most important female roles, namely the mother role assumes different responsibilities and requirements that sometimes are unscheduled and often are exacerbated by the cultural normative expectations attached to motherhood. (Milkie, Peltola, 1999, pp.477).

The main inconvenience that may result from assuming the role overcrowding is the fact that, in time, in an attempt to perfectly cope with more axiological dimensions (Eşi, M.C., 2014, pp.73-83) multiple responsibilities, many failures will also occur (Leñta, O., Tărnăuceanu, F., Cormoş, C., 2013). An overcharged program is certainly a cause of stress for the women with children who have to meet many home-related duties and a main source of fatigue, to be taken into account when treating the balance theme between family and career. The fatigue and stress from work significantly affect the smooth running of family life (Grant-Vallone and Ensher, 2010, pp.333), as evidenced by statistical data obtained in Europe, of which we mention here that 29% of respondents said that they faced difficulties occurred because of the fatigue from work in fulfilling family responsibilities (Leovaridis and Nicolăescu, 2011, pp. 114).

One of the strategies by which a woman could reduce the effects of the motherhood – career dilemma could be the reduction of the incompatibility between work and family, thus to increase the percentage of women who return to work after childbirth can be achieved with the adoption by women of strategies involves finding a reasonable job in terms of location or a job with flexible hours (Vujinovic, 2014, pp. 501). This strategy can prevent the tendency to neglect the family space, because a job with a flexible schedule can help to establish a positive link between work and family (Voydanoff, 2005, pp. 832). For a woman faced with the dilemma of incompatibility between family and career, this opportunity is not only a way to increase the sense of satisfaction that the balance between family and career is established, but also a way to strengthen the sense of security of women in terms of meeting family roles, especially the maternal role.

Although the priorities of women have gained a different dimension in the contemporary era, the fact is that women occupy today jobs with a stressful work program which makes them feel the demanding pressure of the compatibility of the professional time and the time spent with family; women are especially aware of the importance of the irreplaceable parental time, therefore the call for the balance and redefinition of strategies for both worlds are heavily reported. This can easily be achieved when women have the ability to organize their personal lives by trying to combine the characteristics of the professional universe with the family universe; the reason for this is the quality of time spent in family which can provide them an emotional satisfaction and hence a balance of psychic nature by emphasizing the feeling of maternal love that transcends time and space (Trifu, Terec-Vlad, 2013).

### **III. THE CHILD BIRTH – A HINDRANCE TO CAREER OR THE CAREER IS A HINDRANCE TO CHILDBIRTH**

The analysis of the responses showed that first need expressed by women in relation to motivating the desire to have a career is the financial autonomy. By way of exception, it prioritizes the career at the expense of the family. Thus, the responses show that the focal value to which a woman reports to is not the career in itself but its consequences: the autonomy, the independence and security while maintaining the distance from a marital structure that would make her dependent on the resources of others. The reasons that highlight the image that a career can offer a woman certain things (if one understands a career as a way to get respect from others or acquiring a source of personal satisfaction) cannot be neglected. The career appears therefore as a guarantee that certifies them access to an economic level above the average condition, which validates her desire for independence and which resizes her status, increasingly carrying it further away from her previous traditional. The structure of the answers obviously indicates the work culture, assuming duties, a permanent culture validated for women, regardless of the traditional or modern environment.

For the women who have decided to return to work after the maternity leave and those who have decided not to return to work after the maternity leave, it is important to analyze whether the physical presence of women within the family contribute significantly to strengthening the family relationships. The relationship with the family members is described as very good or great, whether or not women took the decision to return to work after the maternity leave. However, the structure of responses shows that the relationship with the family members begins to be defined through the existence of children, which shows a prioritization of the maternal roles of women and relating with the same priority to the conjugal values, the appearance of children in the family is often associated with a source of strengthening the family relationships.

In identifying the main motivations for women having taken either the decision to return to work after the maternity leave, either the decision to stay home after the maternity leave, the care for the family security seems to be the common value. The difference derives from the optics through which caring for the family and therefore the conjugal role structure associated with that type of mentality is seen. Thereby, we will mention "the

*ethic of care* promoted by Carol Gilligan which primarily, supports a psychological logic of relations but, in the same time, she considers that women' moral maturity is based on two elements: rights and care." (D. Jeder, 2006, p.57)

If in the case of the first group of interviewed women, the main motivation for resuming the professional activity is the financial security of the family, the women who decide to stay home after the maternity leave justify their concern for the family by the desire to abandon the career and to invest more time in the relationship with their own child.

Also, the answers reflect the fact that for the both categories of women, the priorities seem to change – for the career women, some of the socializing roles are transferred to institutions, to certain people in the extended family or to nannies, while for the woman who gives up on her career, the role assuming is closer to the classical traditional structure.

The type of attachment that develops between mother and child has an essential role in the decision to continue the career or not. The analysis of the set of motivations for deciding to return to work after childbirth, the professional activity appears as an effective way to overcome specific post-natal depression and an opportunity to keep in touch with the external environment, which may be interpreted in that experiencing other social media can activate again the feeling of autonomy. The importance of the socio-psychological function of the career is underlined, which is understood as a key point in ensuring a balance in the family life.

The resuming of the professional activity is associated with the possibility of the revival of the women's social life through the possibility of establishing interaction relationships in the professional environment. Another important aspect is related to the expression of the anticipated wish to have more children; in this case, the women who do not return to work after the maternity leave further bring into discussion this issue and place it as another reason that underlies the decision compared with the women returning to work after the maternity leave. This highlights the fact that resuming the professional activity has a major consequence within the family, namely, reducing the number of children.

Given that after birth an reassessment of the feminine priorities occurs, the obtained answers show that returning to work is understood differently within speeches, meaning that some describe this moment as a difficult one, which is due to the strong dependency relationship established between the mother and the child since the beginning of the maternity period and which is reinforced over time. The answers that returning to work is valued as "*a breath of fresh air*" (female, 33 years old), or "*a moment of relaxation*" (female, 29 years) should not be neglected; this suggests that some women try to find in the professional activity and a means to free them from the specific life rhythm of a mother and this find a way to exit the household environment.

The responses of women put into the light the fact that keeping the status of career woman by deciding to return to work after the maternity leave acquires a more complex meaning, namely that in addition to the previous trend expressed by women to value career by giving it the role of breadwinner in financial terms, it begins to be valued due to side effects, to its major psychological impact on women.

However, one can notice that both the women who decide to return to work after the childbirth and those who stay at home, enjoy the support from families for the child care; in this respect the main actors are the grandfathers and fathers of children which makes it evident that the family support is a real source of acquiring feminine balance. This can be explained by the high confidence that women place in such persons within the family space and the role they play in the children's lives. While the family support has a major impact upon women, the study identifies the fact that the formal institutional support after returning to work is missing.

The speeches of women emphasize that professional life significantly impacts upon the family life in the sense that resuming the professional activity involves giving away the family time, which shows that the return to work after childbirth assumes the inevitable emergence of a sometimes unconscious compromise between family and career. This triggers an attitude of regret and guilt of the women included in the analysis in terms of the loss of considerable and important time and in their children's lives due to the unpredictability of a woman's career, what makes the family life to be described more through the concept of "free time"; the absolute impossibility to comply with the maternal role in emergencies in the life of their children is also invoked.

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS

Regardless of the categories studied (the career women and the housewives), the value direction is family-oriented. The motivations to return to work are those that take priority in the building of a family budget while the motivations to giving up the work and show a stronger orientation towards family and children. The very decision to give birth confirms the orientation towards the family. Both decisions are having a direct impact upon the family – giving up the career indicates the perspective of an assumed motherhood beyond the socio-professional affirmation desire.

According to the data obtained from the study, both decisions involve dilemmas: the return to work of role involves the role overcrowding while giving up their work implies giving up the career and the social and

professional fulfillment (Terec-Vlad, Trifu & Terec-Vlad, 2015). The return to work creates the idea of autonomy while giving up the work shows a return to the traditional roles and to some material dependence.

The decisions are taken more easily by certain categories of women. Those who cannot tolerate the limitation provided by a set of tasks that censor their autonomy choose the work, even by paying the price of role overcrowding. In reverse, mothers who are accustomed to domestic tasks prefer with priority tasks to dedicate to their children, to their education and therefore to the whole family.

The availability of access formal alternatives that the alternative to develop as functional as possible both the career and the maternal tasks provides (e.g. kindergarten or childcare informal sources, in which the main participants are the grandparents or the nannies) indicated that the decision to return to work after childbirth is taken more easily.

The structure analysis of family activities in relation to the career is closely linked to the decision that women take after the maternity leave in terms of the rational choice to switch to one of the two plans to maintain a balance between the two or giving significant attention to quality time spent with the family, as an important indicator of fulfilling the mother role. Thus, the desire of women to combine career with family caused the occurrence in the family plan of a cost which some mothers consider to be too high. Women do not neglect the duties associated with the roles of woman and mother, hence the emergence and awareness of price of the dual female identity, i.e., the task overloading.

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