

COLLISION „FAMILY-WORK” – MODERN PROJECTIONS

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Abstract: *The collision between family life and work represents a perpetual conflict zone in Bulgarian society; it is also an object of scholarly interest for researchers in different fields, including sociology. The article emphasizes three thematic aspects of the problem: the impacts of work on personal and family life, the impacts of personal and family life on work, and the degree of satisfaction of Bulgarians with the time they devote to work and to their personal lives. In order to study the continuous two-way interaction between the family (as a personal, intimate environment) and work (work and professional life as a field of public interrelations and interactions), the author has conducted secondary analysis of data from the Fifth Wave of the European Social Survey (Bulgaria). General conclusions are drawn, and recommendations are made as to regulating conflictive interaction in the family-work relationship.*

Keywords: *collision, family, work.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The collision between family-life and work is a perpetual zone of conflict in Bulgarian society. The definition of this relationship between the two refers to a clash, a contradiction in the relations of those involved simultaneously in family and professional life. The disbalance in question, between the relations, is provoking the research interest of experts in various fields, including sociology.

This article presents an analysis of the family-work collision, conducted along three lines: *the influence of work on the personal and family life of people, the influence of personal and family life on work, and the degree of satisfaction of Bulgarians with the time they devote to work and personal life.*

The main aim of the analysis is to show how the two-way interaction between family-life and work leads to collision.

To achieve this aim, the following **tasks** have been achieved:

1. The social nature of the family-work collision is delineated.
2. Secondary analysis of data from the European Social Survey – Fifth Wave (Bulgaria) is conducted in the three areas under study [1].

The thesis argued here is that work and professional life exert a negative impact more often than a positive one, on the family.

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2. THE FAMILY-WORK COLLISION AS A SOCIAL PROBLEM

The spheres of family life and work represent two mutually dependent poles. The connection and influences between the private and the public spheres are the main reasons why the family-work collision is studied not as a problem of the individual but as connected to, and dependent on, social processes, conditions and environment. The problem is a social one inasmuch as the social environment has the strongest influence on the family and the family environment [2], on family values, roles and mutual relations, on reproductive inclinations, and on the behavior of the partners in the family. In this social context, state policies are a powerful transformer of the individuals' personal life, generating the creation and functioning of families, the balanced combination of family duties and professional duties, and the raising of children. Many publications have analyzed the various social and economic factors provoking the family-work collision. The basic ones identified are the socio-demographic characteristics of the employed persons, the business climate (the enterprises and their social policies) and the regulative role of the state (through national policies regulating employment, family relations, and parental responsibility) [3].

Facing the "family-work" dilemma, are employed persons with family duties: employed parents and especially employed women [4] – women, because they are more strongly engaged with childbirth and raising children while simultaneously caring for their own professional development and career growth. Official statistics show that women comprise nearly half the economically employed persons in Bulgaria (respectively 46.7% in 2016 and 46.6% in 2017) [5]. The main findings of the time budget survey of the Bulgarian population, conducted in 2009-2010, indicate that the gender-based distribution of the aggregate time is not in favor of women. Women devote nearly twice as much hours as men for household chores (respectively 4.40 hours as against 2.49) [6]. They have less personal leisure time for relaxation, recreation, training and improving their qualification than men. [7]

Today, societies are facing the challenges of the fourth industrial revolution, "the wide range of technological innovations in the physical, digital and biological spheres and growing inequality and polarization in society". [8] These processes inevitably accelerate and aggravate the family-work collision. In this social context, in 2018 the European Parliament initiated inter-institutional negotiations for establishing legal norms through which a better balance between personal and professional life may be achieved in the EU member states. [9]

3. INTERACTION BETWEEN FAMILY AND WORK

Two opposite trends emerge in the study of family-work interaction. The first of these shows people achieving successful personal and professional realization and satisfaction in combining family and professional life. The second refers to the exact opposite: a state of collision, dissatisfaction with personal realization, a disbalance between family and work. This disbalance, in the words of Siyka Kovacheva, "turns into a social problem in contemporary European societies, in view of the increased requirements both at the workplace, with respect to economic efficiency, and in the family, with respect to children and leisure time" [10].

3.1. Work → Family

The first thematic aspect includes the influence of work on personal and family life. In the European Social Survey – Fifth Wave (Bulgaria), this type of influence can be revealed through analysis of the generalized responses to the following three questions: 1. How often do you worry about work problems when not working? 2. How often do you feel too tired after work to enjoy the things you like to do at home? 3. How often do you feel the job prevents you from giving time to your partner or family?

The answers to the first question, “How often do you worry about work problems when not working?” (see Figure 1), show that around one third of Bulgarians (34%) never, or nearly never, worry outside of working hours about things and problems related to work. They draw a clear dividing line between professional and personal life. They do not allow negative experiences and professional stress to go beyond the workplace. As “employed” persons, they restrict and control the possible negative influences of paid professional work. Unlike these people, however, approximately 40% of the surveyed persons fall in the category “worrying sometimes”; and every fifth respondent worries “often”; while 6% say they “always” worry about work problems during and after work.

By this indicator, no significant differences are observed between men and women, but there are some differences when taking age into account. The data show that as age increases, the share of women troubled about work grows. We find that employed women above the age of 45 much more often take their professional problems with them into their personal life, than those under that age. The behavior of older women can be explained by their greater feeling of duty and responsibility with respect to work and to their colleagues and employers, as well as by their desire to preserve their jobs and achieve a good professional image.

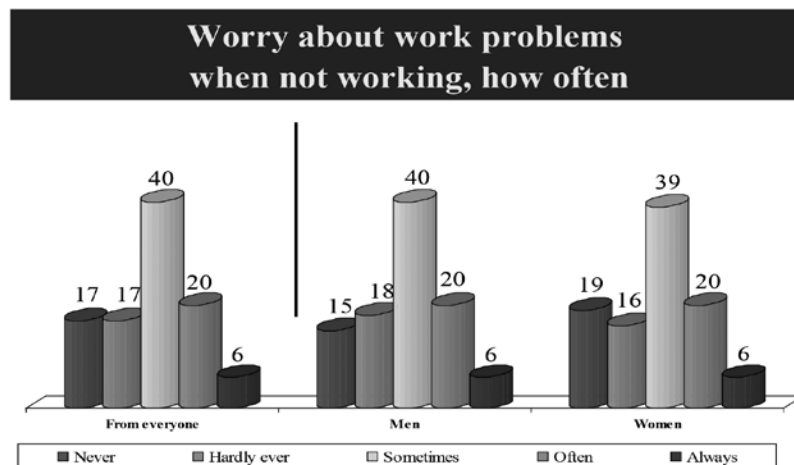


Figure 1. Anxiety at/about work*

* Percentages based on responses

Source: European Social Survey – Fifth Wave (Bulgaria)

The answer to the second question, “How often do you feel too tired after work to enjoy the things you like to do at home?” (Figure 2), indirectly shows the degree of workload, stress and exhaustion after the working day. Nearly half of the Bulgarians (48%) declare that this happens to them sometimes. We find that 35% of Bulgarians very often feel too tired after work to enjoy their leisure and do the things they want to do in the family and outside of home. Very probably, in their case excessive fatigue leads to neglect of domestic, marital and parental functions, or all

of these together. This problem applies to women to a much greater degree than to men. Nearly 31% of women declare that this happens to them often, and for 8%, it is a constant situation; while among men, the respective shares are 24% and 6%.



Figure 2. Tired after work*
 * Percentages based on responses

Source: European Social Survey – Fifth Wave (Bulgaria)

The percentages of answers to the third question, “How often do you feel the job prevents you from giving time to your partner or family?” (Figure 3) indicate collision between family life and work, and specifically, how the role of “employed” directly restricts, eats away at the time spent fulfilling family roles. Results show that this indicator is correlated with the respondents’ gender. The data indicate significant difference in the answers of men and women, the more frequent occurrence of the problem being among women. One out of five women asserts that the job often prevents her from giving as much time as she would like to her partner and family, while for 2% this situation occurs always. The respective shares of men giving these answers are 12% and 2%. The survey data show this problem to be much more distinctly and strongly expressed among women in active age, specifically, among women at the age of 30-50.



Figure 3. Work as an obstacle to giving time to the partner and family*
 * Percentages based on responses

Source: European Social Survey – Fifth Wave (Bulgaria)

3.2. Family → Work

The second thematic aspect comprises the reverse influence – the impact of personal and family life on work. The European Social Survey – Fifth Wave (Bulgaria) contains likewise three questions relevant to this direction of influence: 1. How often do you feel that your partner or family are fed up with the pressure of your job? 2. How often do you feel family responsibilities prevent you from giving the time you should to your job? 3. How often do you find it difficult to concentrate on work because of family responsibilities? (Figures 4, 5 and 6).

For the question, “How often do you feel that your partner or family are fed up with the pressure of your job?” (Fig. 4), 61% of respondents declared that such a situation never or almost never occurs for them. They have the support, understanding and tolerance of their family. Nearly one third indicate that they sometimes feel their partner or family is fed up with the pressure of their job and their being often tired. Only 7% share that they “often or always” feel such a negative attitude in their partner or family.

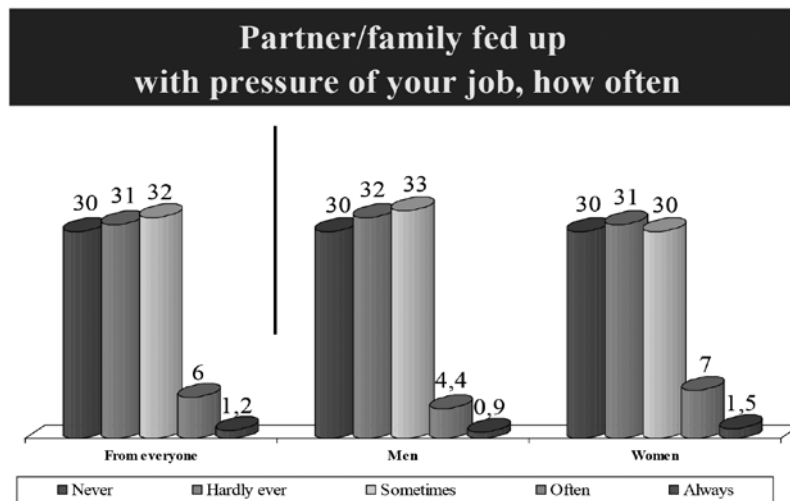


Figure 4. Partner's/family's dislike for pressure of job*

*Percentages based on responses

Source: European Social Survey – Fifth Wave (Bulgaria)

In answer to the question, “How often do you feel family responsibilities prevent you from giving the time you should to your job?” (Fig. 5), about 85% of the surveyed men and women indicate that their family responsibilities never, or hardly ever, prevent them from giving the necessary time to their work. This suggests that Bulgarians are able to manage their family duties and responsibilities in a way that does not get in the way of their professional duties. When comparing these answers with the answers to the reverse question, “How often do you feel the job prevents you from giving time to your partner or family?”, we find an inconsistency. More than half the surveyed persons share that their job had a negative impact on the time they spend with their partners and family (“sometimes” for 35%, “often” for 16%, and “always” for 2%). This contrast requires additional study and analysis.

The answers to the question, “How often do you find it difficult to concentrate on work because of family responsibilities?” (Fig. 6) show that nearly 14% of the surveyed persons sometimes, often or always find it difficult to concentrate in this respect. Thus, by the time of the survey, this problem did not seem urgent for most Bulgarians. When examining the age structure, we see that difficulties with concentration due to family responsibilities is indicated more often by

women in the age range 30-40 than among younger and older ones. This can be explained by the fact that in our country, the women in the age range 30-40 are those who give birth and raise little children; they have more responsibilities related to children, which directly affects their concentration on professional duties.

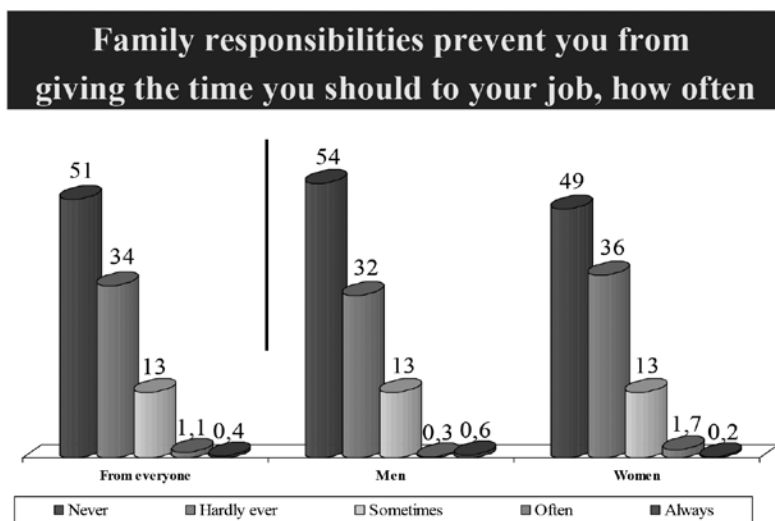


Figure 5. Family responsibilities as an obstacle to the job*
 * Percentages based on responses
 Source: European Social Survey – Fifth Wave (Bulgaria)

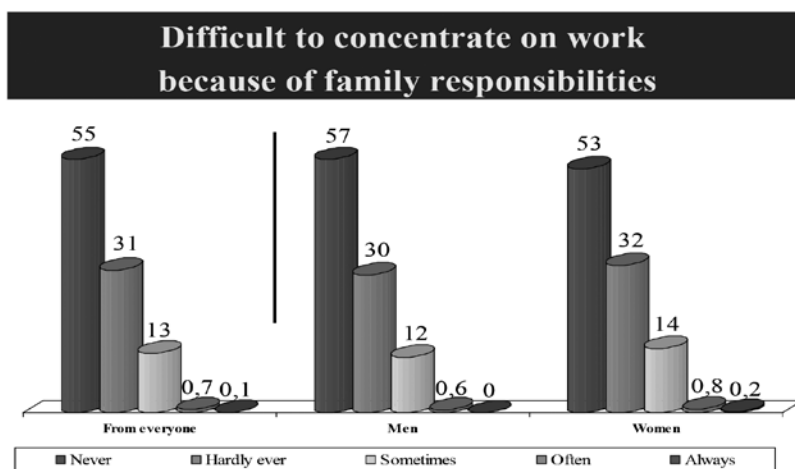


Figure 6. Influence of family responsibilities and concentration on work*
 * Percentages based on responses
 Source: European Social Survey – Fifth Wave (Bulgaria)

3.3. Satisfaction with the ratio of time for work and for personal life

The third thematic aspect concerns the degree of satisfaction of Bulgarians with the ratio of time they devote to paid work and the time spent in other activities in their lives. The results of the European Social Survey show there are some differences between the two sexes with regard to degrees of satisfaction in this respect.

It is important to note that one fifth of Bulgarians (21%) are “equally satisfied and unsatisfied” with the ratio of time they spend in work and in other activities, including training, recreation, etc. A low degree of satisfaction is indicated by 17% of the surveyed persons (13% men and 21% women). The rest (62%) declare they are satisfied to various degrees. Women more often than men indicate a low degree of satisfaction with their time distribution and ratio. The explanation to this may should be sought in the numerous roles modern women fulfill, in their workload in terms of professional and domestic work. The lowest degree of satisfaction is declared by approximately half the young women aged up to 24. It may be presumed their strong dissatisfaction stems from the discrepancy between their expectations in professional and family aspects and their actual capacity to realize those expectations.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REGULATING CONFLICTIVE INTERACTION IN THE FAMILY-WORK RELATIONSHIP

The secondary analysis of European Social Survey data shows the existence of collision between family-life and work. Our analysis has confirmed the thesis we argue that work and professional life have a negative impact on family life more often than the latter does on the former. Analysis of the findings has empirically shown the existence of a number of negative effects of the family-work collision on people, including anxiety, fatigue, antipathy, lack of concentration, dissatisfaction with the distribution of work time and leisure, etc. These negative consequences should be regulated and overcome, which requires formulating appropriate recommendations for the regulation of family and professional duties in ways that may help balance relations between all social actors. The recommendations in question can be set at the macro, meso and micro level.

Macro-level recommendations refer to the need to create an adequate normative basis (for which the European Parliament launched an inter-institutional discussion in 2018) for regulating and balancing the interaction between various social actors involved in the family-work collision.

At meso-level it is possible to apply an effective social policy in companies by which it may be possible: 1. to provide flexible working hours (the “flexicurity” concept) [11]; 2. to sponsor children’s rooms, areas, gardens in companies in order to assist young parents; 3. to perfect the managerial approach to employees, to apply the new approach – management through values.

The recommendations at the level of the **individual** refer to building in people a personal desire for self-improvement and enhancement of work abilities, motivation for the creation of a family and raising children, educating people in respect, understanding and empathy towards partners, between colleagues at work, etc.

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