

SOME LEGASLATIVE AND SOCIAL OBSTACLES IN CAREER OF SLOVENE WOMEN IN SCIENCE

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Abstract:

The image of a woman in the present Slovene society is still linked to prejudice to set limits and makes her feel bad. Especially, because the environment's opinion contains some certain activities how a woman is incapable of doing or is not able to do them good enough. One of the areas with this belief is the area of science. One of the most important measures for encouraging women to pursue an academic/science career was the exclusion of maternity and her role in domestic work and later on also parental leave from the time set for elections to higher academic /scientific titles for women. The actual position of women in science and research in Slovenia is similar to those which have been observed all around the world: horizontal and vertical segregation, subtle discrimination and thus worse situation in regard to the male scientists, in spite of the quantitative prevalence of the women students at the graduate level. Our research aim was to study and research on the pattern of casual 206 women. We were particularly concentrated on their present position which in great dimension is denoted by discrimination and inequality; especially as her formal work is understood as her precarious work and her domestic work as invisible and unpaid, from "love" done work. We determined the position of women in the field of science and in her domestic environment. But we have to consider the fact how in comparison with the past, women are nowadays allowed to take new roles and possibilities of public activities, but only when the traditional duties are preserved. That is why we can assert that women in science are sexually discriminated.

Keywords: women, science, education, domestic work, family, balance, discrimination, inequality, Slovene society.

1. INTRODUCTION

As women are mentioned in the literature, they are constantly placed on a position in the family, while outside. Society on one hand sees woman as a sexual category and it also attaches to traditional female roles. Her primary roles are understood as the roles of housewife, wife and mother. These values are part of the tradition, handed down from generation to generation through the generations and thus discriminate against gender. On the other hand, the company sees a woman as a person who is able to personally improve herself (Oakley, 2000, p. 95), showing how the liberal-democratic values apply to all regardless of gender.

All this shows the duality and complexity of the situation of women. Family obligations and (gender) asymmetry of their performance in the family Slovenian legislation for many years to help parents to better coordinate paid work and family responsibilities. It is also worth noting that the law and social policy in this field through the transition period are not demoted, but have in some places has greatly improved. Thus, in the last two decades adopted laws build pre-existing basis for balancing family and work commitments (Kanjuro Mrčela, 2007, p. 17), but the law does not only bring conceived real situation, which should allow women to "non-discriminatory" access to scientific sphere. We are aware how the family as the basic group of companies (Haralambos & Hollborn, 2001) represents an individual an individual obligation of aid and support for the family and actually meet the emotional demands of the family (Fuligni & Pedersen, 2002; Tseng, 2004). Family obligations, for each individual account for some specific, which is conditioned by its own organization and family relations as well as life partner. It's no secret how today professionally active women face the dilemma how successfully reconcile their professional role with that of private. In the contemporary Slovene society many women still figure associated with prejudices. Especially because there are certain activities which are feminine and according to the environment cannot or are unable to perform well enough. Among the latter due to the level of education and the work also considered the scope of science. The family constitutes a community of parents and children (ZZZDR - UPB, Article 2) and to have a family is not just being a parent, but it comes out also with many other roles and commitments, which one is aware of more and others less.

For most of companies employing women through the process of socialization, internalized sense of obligation and concern for the growth of emotional warmth and stability in her family, so she feels responsible for the upbringing and care of children (Goriup, 1996, p. 10). European Commission data show that on average women in Slovenia with their children spend 2 hours and 23 minutes a day, while men only 56 minutes; they spend on household obligations 4 hours and 57 minutes, while men only 2 hours and 39 minutes (Kanjuro Mrčela, 2007). In most cases, women combine both professional and private sphere and perform the tasks in both areas simultaneously. This icon represents the "perfect woman" who is this time more load (Settles, 2007, p. 270) as an incentive.

2. WOMAN'S »NATURAL ROLE« AND HER SCIENTIFIC CAREER

Women in European countries got permission to study at the universities during the last part of the 19th century. Since the first Slovenian university was established in Ljubljana (1919), the share of women among undergraduate students was growing until the beginning of World War II. During the socialist period the mass entering of women to the high education and science was stimulated by the general gender equality policy and by some special measures.

For the abolishing of the hindrance regarding women/mothers with academic career (prevalent is continuous career) on academic institutions one measure was very important, namely from midst of the 1970s the exclusion of maternity (and even parental) leave from the time set for re-elections to higher academic/scientific titles for women (and de facto theoretically for men). The situation of women in science in Slovenia at the beginning of the 21st century has not been dramatically changed in spite of the transition of the political system. The course of the transition from the self-governmental socialism to the capitalism has not been realised by the shock therapy and in this way the beginning processes of the gender equalization also in the field of science and research were not fundamentally interrupted in spite of the strong tendencies towards the re-traditionalization of the androcentric (patriarchal) order. However, this does not mean that the expressions of the discrimination against women are entirely excluded. Among plenty of signs of marginal position of women within the university (as a “male fortress”) at least some should be mentioned. Despite the strong feminization of student populations at graduate level and the gradual increase of women among post-graduate students, women are still underrepresented within the university teaching staff. The conclusion of J. Kettle (1996, p. 53) about the situation could be generalised and valid for Slovenia, too as: *“Women academics have not increased their presence in the same proportions as female students”*. Typical to the woman’s situation in Slovene science is their horizontal segregation (concentration in “female” academic disciplines - mostly humanities, social sciences) and their vertical segregation expressed by pyramidal model of woman’s inclusion into the hierarchically distributed position - this means, that the share of women decreases according to the increase of the importance (power and prestige) of the position (Jogan 1992, p. 117). Although during the last decade there has been a slight increase of women’s share at the senior academic positions, they are underrepresented at these positions and “men are three times more likely than women to reach the most senior levels” (*Mapping the Maze...* 2008, p. 5) The pyramidal structure of the participation of women in university teaching staff is seen also in regard to the hierarchical distribution of universities in regard to prestige: women are concentrated more in the lower graded institutions and/or in the “new” universities. While women are by law equal to men, and due to the activities of various official bodies for equal opportunities in some countries (primarily within the EU), women are particularly confronted with subtle and covert discrimination (“glass ceilings”/“walls”, “maze”) which is manifested in various ways (Radtke, 1991, p. 69). Put shortly and succinctly: women in the academies have often still the position of the “academic proletariat” and they mostly play the role of “handmaids of knowledge class” (Stolte-Heiskanen, 1991, p. 35). From this point of view the results of various investigations are showing special features of woman’s social position at the academy and are not surprising. Women are more socially isolated than men, particularly they are not admitted into the male informal networks (“old boys”) which are very important ingredients in professional career success (Bagilhole, 1994, p. 18, 20; Kettle, 1996, p. 60; Evetts, 1996, p. 16); they are facing with the lack of self-confidence as also with the lack of support systems and encouragement in their working environment (Stolte-Heiskanen, 1991, p. 56), they are working in a “chilly climate” (Harding, 1996, p. 9), etc. All these features contribute to the marginal position of women in regard to the managerial activity (Hornby & Shaw, 1996, p. 79).

3. SOME LEGASLATIVE ASPECTS OF WOMEN POSITION IN SCIENCE

Hidden gender discrimination is present also in the field of science, which contradicts the *UN Human Rights Declaration* (1948, article 2) and the *EU Charter of Fundamental Rights*

(2000, article 23). At the same time we are losing especially women's intellectual capacities which represents a loss for science as well as for society as a whole. This worldwide phenomenon has become a global problem which the United Nations Organization explored particularly in the *UN Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace (1976–1985)*. At the end of this decade, the *Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the year 2000* (1985) were adopted. Article 203 establishes: "We particularly need to encourage greater integration of women in scientific as well as technological training and education." Within the global framework an important role in raising awareness of the need to eliminate different forms of discrimination in the field of science was played by UNESCO. In 1998 at Bled the UNESCO European Regional Conference »*Women in Science - Quality and Equality. Conditions for Sustainable Human Development*», was focussed on the future commitment of science from a gender perspective. Among many documents of the European Commission which implement the policy of equal gender opportunities in science and which in the long term should contribute to the "tectonic shifting" in this field are: *Women and Science – Mobilisation of Women for the Enrichment of European Research-* The programme for the implementation of gender equality in science, adopted by the European Commission on 17 February 1999; *Women and Science. Excellence and Innovation – Gender Equality in Science* (adopted by EU Commission on 11 March 2005); *Waste of Talents: Turning Private Struggles into a Public Issue* (EC, 2004); *Roadmap for Equality between Women and Men (2006–2010)*, (report of the ENWISE Expert Group).

In these documents, the tasks are more closely focused on problems regarding horizontal and vertical segregation and encompass the encouraging of interdisciplinary research on gender relationships, the integration of gender dimension into the measures of scientific excellence, the strengthening of men's role in the implementation of equal gender opportunities in science, the increase of women's share in decision-making positions as well as in the fields of technical disciplines and innovations, the establishment and assurance of favourable organizational circumstances for a successful reconciliation of work and family obligations. Among others, they expose that: "Special attention should be devoted to the realisation of the approach which would implement gender equality in the national educational policy – from primary school to higher education institutions; universities and scientific institutions should set up a department or appoint a person responsible for the development of activities which would motivate women in science and science, and which would implement the policy of equal employment opportunities; ... the public media should improve the image of science ... the image should particularly attract women and the younger generation ..."

4. SOME ASPECTS OF “DOUBLE BURDEN” OF WOMEN IN SCIENCE IN SLOVENIA

In Slovenia, women now represent nearly half of employees; further 48 % of the workforce which is 49.5 % of women, which is higher than the average achieved by the other members of the EU. The past situation of women, in comparison the equality with men, stressed the importance of women's economic independence and their right to education. Today, the researchers found through analysis that the majority of people reject the ideology of one (male) breadwinner and egalitarian standards, and take an active role of women as legitimate and as the basis for their economic independence (Mladenić, 2006). According to the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia most women and men shared the view that both contribute to the household of family income. Such is life easier, since the higher the household income, which represents the quality of life in material terms, but it is such a life even more stressful, because by creating a family and the birth parents of children left less

time for care, child care and / or less time for their achievements and work careers. Through whole the period gender equality as an ideological objective that was constitutionally confirmed, represented also the basis for practical regulation on all important levels and spheres of social life. Gradually the recognition of necessary completion and supporting of the legal acts contributed to the practical measures for the abolition of obstacles for women in public and private life. The concepts of “*socially responsible parenthood*” and of the »*humanization of gender relations*« stimulated the creation of legal acts and also the building of the care facilities.

As in 1991 Slovenia became an independent state with the multiparty parliamentary democracy and market economy, the abolition of the self-governmental system did in no way mean also the continuous betterment of social position of women. Various indicators showed, that the »modernization and democratisation« included more and more obvious androcentric and even misogynist attitudes. Ironically, this process passed as “Europeanization”; in this frame the meaning of “Europe” was mostly based on the one-sided and attractive images of Western democratic societies. The mass entering of women the high education and science is visible by the portion of women students at the undergraduate studies and even more the portion of women graduates. From the beginning of women’s entering the high education and scientific activity a (traditional) horizontal and a vertical functional segregation has been existed. Even more evident is the vertical segregation in political bodies making decisions concerning science and research, which can be seen in the structure of the most important bodies at state level. The income gap between women and men is relatively small in Slovenia: the gross income including supplements for women in the highest category (full professor, scientific councillor) amounted to 91.9 %; without supplements it amounted to 95.1 % in comparison to men.

4.1. Coordination of paid work in science and family life

Many research findings around the world and also in Slovenia show how the attitude towards parenting in the workplace cause the concern for employers because parenting does not represent the values, but a disturbing factor in the work process. Kanjuro Mrčela and Černigoj Sadar (2007, p. 29) lists the following as problems faced by parents in balancing work and family life: difficulties in finding a job due to a Planned Parenthood or parental responsibility; negative experiences after childbirth-related careers: prevents progress, assigned lower post; long hours and extra workload following the birth of a child; etc. Problems listed in this new Slovenian type of capitalism, occur in all organizations, but are expressed in women’s nowadays life. The fact is that women in science want to coordinate work and family life from work; they are more often than men absent due to sick leave or to care for family members. Therefore they perform fewer overtime hours and are slowly progressing in the workplace or in their careers (Vertot et al., 2007). At the same time it is hard to understand why researchers and experts still put question and explore why, there in science and engineering professions, are fewer women than men (Rosser, 2004, p. 24). Especially, as The Constitution itself of the Republic of Slovenia also stresses out how the State protects the family, motherhood, fatherhood, children and youth, and as well as our country's family policy geared to employers to facilitate the reconciliation of family and professional life, the legal provisions for women in science and in other professional spheres favour. However, reality shows its image. It should be recognized that good measures of coordination work and family life to help reduce gender disparities, to improve the quality of working environment and address the problem of negative demographic trend, are needed. And, as Hrženjak (2007,

p. 34) stated, each organization in its organizational structure enables women to give birth more often, well take care of home and family and were both active in the labour market.

5. RESEARCH RESULTS AND METHODOLOGY

One of the very important barriers for women scientists is the conflict between scientific work and private life. Our study addressed the research facts about family obligations, which represent an obstacle to scientific careers of women. Especially, we focused on exploring the distribution of family responsibilities and the time they spend on it. Much attention was devoted their situation, which due to its complexity, depends on several factors (from the workplace, organizations within the family division of domestic responsibilities between partners). We have also investigated the possible changes that could significantly affect the 'preferred' status of women in science and in a more productive use of scientific potential of women in society. The variables we examined in their affiliated unions with three independent variables: age, job and age of children regardless of relevance.

5.1. Pattern

In a sample of 206 women employed in science were included (faculties of the University of Maribor and Ljubljana and the Slovenian institutes). On non-casual pattern with which we researched how women are employed in science, how they organize their family responsibilities, how they share family responsibilities with their partners and some proposals highlighted in order to improve their position. Among respondents almost half of them were between 31 and 40 years old; at least they were older than 60 and those younger than 30 years. Most respondents occupied positions of Associate Professor and Assistant Professor, but some were also occupied in surround possible position (mostly these were professional colleague). Most of them are mothers of primary school children; younger surveyed women are still childless.

5.2. Methods of data collection and analysis

Based on the literature we have compiled a questionnaire, split between women working in institutions dealing with science and research. Interviews were conducted anonymously and individually. For the objectivity, we provided mostly closed types of questions in which we could not change the information with subjective judgments. Processing and data analysis were performed with SPSS 16.0 computer program.

How higher academic degree increases the time that women spend on paid work, and reduces the time spent by women for other family responsibilities, shows the chart below.

Table 1: Organisation of working time of women scientists

	Household	Family care	Paid work	Free time
Lecturer	1,67	2,67	9	1,67
High lecturer	1,67	3	10	1
Lector	1,64	2,23	8,31	1
Assistant	2,32	1,57	9,86	1,5
Assistant professor	1,71	2,57	9,78	1,3
Associate professor	2,09	2,17	10,43	1,04
Full Professor	1,25	3	10,5	1
others	1,53	2,06	9	1,35
Total	1,92	2,26	9,64	1,22

Significant differences in the time that respondents spend on paid work for the working place were found, since the higher the academic title of respondents over time they devoted to paid work. Family welfare assistants spend the least time, as they are childless. Comparing the distribution of time Associate Professor, we find that the latter paid work devoted a lot of time (which average 10.43 hours a day), while caring for a family less (an average of only 2.17 hours per day). On the other hand, the lecturer devoted less time to paid work (an average of 9 hours per day) and more time caring for family (average 2.67 hours per day). The data thus confirm our hypothesis; they clearly show the trends of time-use differences between scientists with different titles.

Our basic hypothesis, that men and women in scientific careers have equal opportunities for promotion, may be adopted in modified form: namely, that equal opportunities for advancement of both sexes exist, but (are) felt by the older and more experienced scientists, while the less confident that equality promotion cannot be guaranteed. According to the study hypothesis, we evaluated the responses to the question of how respondents rated the overall situation of women in science in our country.

Table 2: Number of (f) and in percentage (f %) of the respondents' estimation of the general situation of women in science in Slovenia

	f	f %
Very bad	4	1,9
Bad	24	11,7
Neither bad nor good	98	47,6
good	72	35,0
Very good	8	3,9
Total	206	100,0

Most respondents chose to assess the status of women in science in our country is neither good nor bad, but many also of those who rated their situation as good. We found significant differences in the time that respondents spend on paid work for the working place, since the higher the academic title of respondents over time they devoted to paid work. Family welfare assistants spend the least time, which is largely still do not have children.

Table 3: Results of the test-dependent relationships between variables and opportunities for advancement on the job

Equal opportunities for women and men for the advancement of age	χ^2 -Test-results: $\chi^2 = 16,198$ g = 8; P = 0,040
Equal opportunities for women and men for the advancement according to work place	χ^2 -Test-results: $\chi^2 = 56,829$ g = 14; P = 0,000

In the trial-dependent relationships between variables are age-based, χ^2 -test found a statistically significant difference between age of female respondents and equal opportunities for women and men for promotion. That there are equal opportunities for advancement most agreed respondents older than 60 years, but at least the age of 30 years. The χ^2 -test showed a statistically significant difference between respondent's jobs and equal opportunities for women and men for promotion. Respondents with higher titles, most consider that the same opportunities for advancement of women and men are provided, while those with lower titles are not so sure. Women scientists, mainly in their households cook, shop, clean and care for children; men mainly perform only minor repairs inside or outside the house or the dwelling. Both partners are responsible only for the same monetary affairs and education of children

and their school affairs. These trends suggest that women scientists, although employed, care for the household and are still indispensable in activities relating to children. The data show that in their families the domestic work and child care (still) are not evenly distributed among the partners.

As we assumed that men and women in scientific careers have equal opportunities for advancement, we used data on the opinions of respondents whether there are equal opportunities for women and men for promotion. Most of them are estimated that gender bias in the processes of advancement opportunities for women and men exist. In most cases (456 %) surveyed women believed that the gender bias in quality assessment procedures exist. Many (41 %) were also undecided.

Table 4: Number of (f) and in percentage (f %) of the respondents' proposals by age

		age					
		under 30	31 to 40	41 to 50	51 to 60	over 60	Total
Proportionate distribution of family duties	f	2	20	18	6	6	52
	f%	12,5	21,7	31	20,0	60,0	25,2
Reorganization of (institutional)child's care	f	8	16	4	6	2	36
	f%	50,0	17,4	6,9	20,0	20,0	17,5
Domestic assistance (parents, domestic helper)	f	4	6	12	6	0	24
	f%	25,0	6,5	20,7	6,7	,0	11,7
Higher income for employed with children	f	0	10	2	2	2	16
	f%	,0	10,	3,4	6,7	20,0	7,8
Working time reorganization	f	2	30	22	14	0	78
	f%	12,5	43,5	37,9	46,7	,0	37,9
Total	f	16	92	29	30	10	206
	f%	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0

17.5 % of respondents expressed the need to reorganize as child care, which they consider would help greatly to relieve the parents of the special nature of the work. There were various proposals on a revised working time of the kindergartens, especially the opening of kindergartens in the afternoon and evening, as scientific research takes place only in the morning. Especially, as the parents working in the field of science, often do not complete the 8-hour working hours at their work places, as their work continues until the late evening hours, or even is continued at home at night. Many respondents, 11.7 %, also highlighted that the family was a major obstacle for progress in their career, especially if they had no help at home. The respondents in particular emphasized the help of their parents or partners and some also estimated their conviction that their scientific career would not be impeded, if the State would ensure some domestic help at home. Without helpers, who iron, wash, protect children, many more respondents would not be able to cater for all. These proposals were suggested by the majority of respondents older than 30 years. At the least, 7.8 %, but still a lot of respondents believe that for employees with children an increased income would enable the scientists to reconcile work and family life. Thus, such employees are devoted to family and to work, and aware that some domestic responsibilities can be carried out by someone else. On the basis of the offered proposals and possible improvements to leading institutes to improve the quality of employer's lives and some possibilities for changing the organization of work time, what is according to respondents, the best solution that would help to facilitate scientific research of the female scientists? Ideas of female respondents are realistic and

achievable and possible, and the life would be for all involved, not just women scientists, much easier.

6. CONCLUSION

Concerning the individual level, first of all the empowerment of women in regard to their self-esteem, self-confidence, self-evaluation of intellectual abilities is a necessary condition for the equalization of opportunities for their career promotion. The women's disburdening of traditionally determined domestic and family duties and responsibilities is also very important; this burden namely contributes to the woman's disbalanced personal identity and to the culpabilization of the majority of academic women. Yet, these changes do not only depend on the individual desires and designs of academic women. Women in science and research should be supported by all relevant actors (partners, male colleagues) and institutional order (including the mentoring system). But, however, without complex activity of women in science themselves (at least at the beginning), the apparent enchanted circle could not be solved, or the path out of the "maze" could not be found. Through research, we found certain evidence which in practice should result in change for the better. In the first instance would need to improve our society and the State, which both are coping with an acute economic crisis. We need also a new active fathering and to promote an active involvement of father in family life, which would enable woman an easier ascent through the academic career ladder. In addition, one of the major movements in improving the situation of women in science should be the elimination of gender bias in academic circles (and, of course, generally in employment and promotions). Mentioned above, it would be required to establish more social control, a model should be directed in the elimination of gender bias. We estimate a mere exercise of measures to create a gender balance. In Slovenia we have adequately trained professionals, but the employers are very selective in employment. The latter is the case, searching for a job, as a woman than men; they prefer to opt for the men. An important measure is promoting equality between women and men researchers. Currently, women are underrepresented in scientific institutions, especially in leadership positions, so it is important to realize that greater gender balance at all levels in the exploration of a key element in building public confidence in science is a global goal. Listed ideas are plausible, but there are many movements in the society and in the minds of women scientists that will become reality.

To sum up, the family and family obligations represent a major obstacle in professional progress of women in science and research. But individuals show that coordination is possible. We estimate how woman as scientists and researcher is on important decision whether to accept such decisions and compromises that allow her such work in science and in domestic life, or she allows to be stopped and accepts the unequal position in comparison with male colleagues.

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