

EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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ABSTRACT

Gender perspective and employment of women now seems almost trivial. Unemployment is one of today's social nightmares. However, few examine these relationships that produce really complex and useful results. The aim of my research is to analyse development of sustainable labour market of 21st century by aspect of gender

Keywords: women's employment, sustainable economy, sustainable labour market, demography.

INTRODUCTION

“The model to be followed would be such a structure, where women would be able to contribute to the economic growth, and at the same time they could enjoy the economic and social advantages provided by the fair, not uncertain workplaces. (J. Somavia, 2008). As researchers and specialists, dealing with the recovery possibilities of other poor countries, he thinks as well, that the fortification of the role of women in the economic life is the key to sustainability and development. Fortunately, in our case – in Europe – the situation is not so radical, but even so lot of women are extruded from the job market or have a lower position than her abilities would make possible, which is a is a very serious loss.

My PhD research is dealing with this basic problem: In Hungary, despite the efforts of the past decades, demographic processes are threatening economic stability.

The research question of this article is: How has the situation of women changed in the labour market in the recent past?

The estimation of János Köllő (2010.) based on corporate panel led many other interesting conclusion over the dominance of reduction in employment. The staff and salaries of companies employing mostly men are forcefully decreased than average. This results reflects the fact that the production companies employ more men were also worse than average measured in employment and wages. Interestingly, in case of collective redundancies the situation is different. This form of the dismissal hit women slightly stronger. My article is based on the following assumption that women are one of the losers of the crisis like on the European labour market trends.

WOMEN IN THE LABOUR MARKET

Without the role of women in the labour market, Europe cannot be competitive.

It is essential to examine which experiences women face in the course of their work, which strategies they develop in order to achieve their goals, and which social opportunities and expectations have a negative effect on their possibilities.

The below Figure 1 shows, that the proportion of the total employed population in relation to the economically active population is higher among the men both in the European Union and in Hungary. But the fact, that today several international organizations treat the disadvantageous situation of women with high priority, and they try to control it with the help of various regulations and laws, indicates a change in the positive direction. The results of their work are already visible, mainly in the field of higher education, where the number of female students is higher, than those of the male students. This outcome is important to be mentioned, as among women with lower education the unemployment rate is much higher, than among graduates. Therefore, it may be hypothesized, that there is a positive correlation between the participation in the higher education and the job-finding possibilities on the labour market. (K. Koncz, 2008.)

Based on an American study (Fatih, G, 2013), the participation in the higher education not only contributes to better carrier opportunities, but to a more secure family life as well, as the number of divorces with unfavourable outcome (women bringing up their children alone, without any support after divorce) is clearly less among educated woman as well.

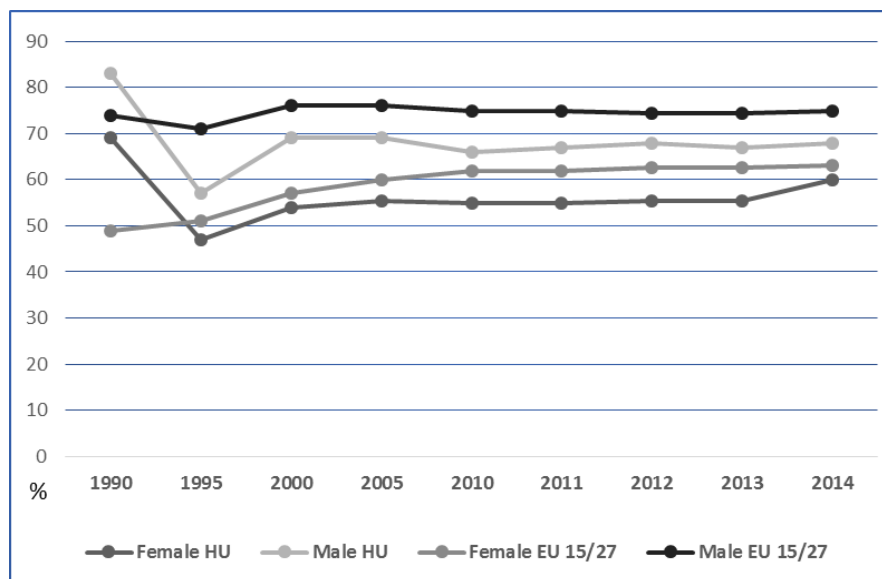


Figure 1 The change of the employment rate according to gender between 1990 and 2014 (Edited by the author based on data of Eurostat)

What is the reason for the lower employment rate in the case of women? In order to improve the low employment rate, it is necessary to examine the root cause. In my opinion the problem can be examined from different aspects. In the case of the employer it has to be stressed, that there is scarcely any workplace, which would treat the home and employment duties flexible, as full-time employment and unlimited term contract dominates. Women with underage children have much less possibilities, than those with adult children or without children, as the latter can much better adapt to the strict expectations. Due to the fact that, permeability is very low on the organized labour market between the “actives” and the “excluded”, woman often have difficulties in finding a job following long term unemployment. In the women’s favour are a healthier lifestyle and a longer life expectancy.

Figure 2 shows, that with the growing number of children the employment of women is decreasing. While the employment rate of parents with 1-2 children is around 60-70%, the employment rate of parents with more than 3 children is over 44%. More and more women with older children return to the labour market – the employment rate of those with children of 6-16 years corresponds to the EU average employment rate. Based on the data of the Hungarian Central Statistical Office (KSH), women in Hungary stay at home with their child after their birth in average 4,7 years long, which is unjustified much. The high number of divorces and single mothers has a negative influence on the willingness of women to have children at a younger age. (before the development of their career).

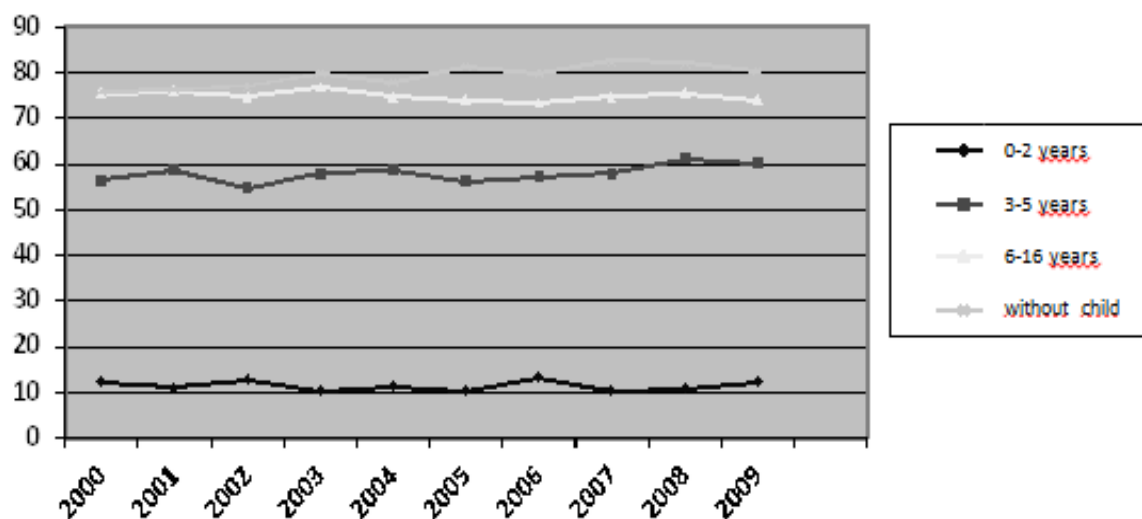


Figure 2 Employment rate of women aged 25-49 in Hungary according to the age of children in their household (KSH)

The above mentioned stereotypes play of course an important part in the disparity of the employment rate as well. Most of the women (nearly 70 percent) choose a field of study in the area of business studies and leadership, which are followed by teacher training and education science. In the area of physics, computer and technical sciences, production and processing industry and architecture men are

dominating. It is characteristic that in such fields the chances of success for women is more difficult. But, besides the horizontal segregation the vertical segregations is characteristic as well, as the leading positions are dominated by men. (B. Vatamány, 2011). Based on the results of the study, conducted by the Technical University of Budapest (BME), in relation to the career planning of women, women more often chose online employment agencies when searching for employment, than men, at the same time men are characterized much more by more active usage of job fairs and social capital. As the position on the labour market is significantly determined by the social capital, women have to face further disadvantages. (K. Koncz, 2009)

WOMEN'S ROLES IN THE SUSTAINABLE SOCIETY

The differentiation of women and men in the different fields of life is not a new phenomenon, it is as old as the history. Men established a power nomenclature around themselves and the ideas of this world has inherited, remained, while the world has changed. Although in this new world the role and possibilities of women have improved, the double standard remained.

Certain activities and characteristics are basically associated with a certain gender. Various classical, stereotype theories exists, based on which, women and men are different in certain characteristics, and due to this, the roles held by women and those that can be held are different. Men are not sentimental, women are not the best drivers. The role of women is to keep the family and the relationship together and for them the outer appearance is more important, they are more intuitive and in contrast to men less rational. Furthermore, there are expected behaviour patterns like helpfulness, friendliness, low willingness to take risk, slower decision making (etc.). But these stereotypes, determinations are not supported by the biology. In some cases we can find empirically proved differences, but in the background of these are the norms relating to the gender, not the biological determination. Both men and women learn already from their childhood what a man and a woman must be, further they are even praised for certain kind of manifestations. In general, we can say that characteristics relating to the chances of success are qualified as male (competitiveness, ambition, self-confidence), which can have a degrading effect on ambitious women, who re-evaluate classical roles. (R. Antoni, 2010) Based on the gender theory, each party has the right to own chances of success based on their own characteristics and abilities. It does not aim to efface the biological gender (we often meet this misunderstanding), but the expectations relating to that, and it tries to secure the equal conditions that way. On the labour market of the sustainable society, we do not talk about the differentiation of the biological genders, but the social genders. In countries in Europe with classical family patterns, where the expenditures regarding the institutional care of underage children are low, the number of births significantly decreased, while in countries, where the synchronization of family and work duties of parents with underage children has high priority and they have more resources for the above purpose, the number of

births was relatively favourable. Countries with high employment rate among women, has a high birth rate. (Ministry of National Economics, 2012). There would be a significant potential in the employees with underage children, if the problem of the atypical employment and flexible child care could be solved. The fact of the startlingly low demographical index is considered an especially important subject area. (Á. Nagy, 2014).

„One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman” (S. Beauvoir, 1949)

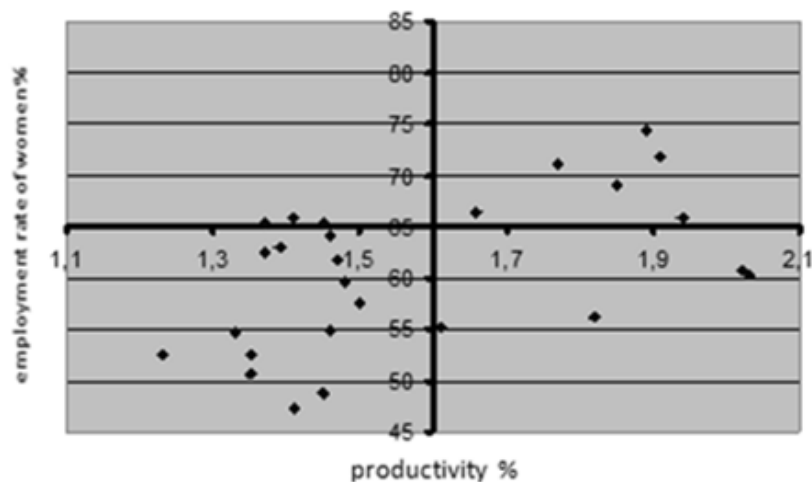


Figure 3 Relation of productivity and employment (Gy. Pulay, 2010.)

It is important to make a distinction between hierarchy, and the differentiation of genders, as the association of certain activities with a certain gender serves the sustenance of the structure of superiority and inferiority. Researches, conducted in the field of employment history show, that it is not the content of the work which significantly influences whether a certain activity is done by men or women, but the social status. This is a control mechanism, which controls the possibility of the accessibility to certain positions, and intensifies the marginality. This can be an institutional restriction, with the social phaseout of certain fields (usually filled by women) and with the subordination, devaluation of given activities. The legitimacy at a symbolic level, the codification of certain jobs as male or female is of same importance. In this case play media, school books and advertisement, due to their effect on the public opinion, a very important part. Based on the principle of even-handed treatment this discrimination is inconsequent, and does not have an objective foundation. (B. Vatamány, 2011)

WOMEN'S ROLE CHANGED

Despite of the equal professional know-how, women usually have less chance to make a career than men. Although during the last centuries the number of women in

managerial position increased in the developed countries, this change did not have an impact on the field of higher positions (pyramid effect). The number of women in a top manager position is still very low. Managers, who are powerful, aggressive, competitive, strong-minded and self-confident, have much better chances to advancement. Nevertheless, women have developed counter characteristics due to their education therefore they are in a disadvantageous position, as their behaviour is usually contrary to those expectations, required in a leading position. In order to be appreciated, women who manage to get a top manager position, use the male model of behaviour patterns and attitudes.

In my opinion the existence of a national gender equality strategy and the social acceptance of the gender equality is essential, but appropriate conditions in the course of the selection process in the case of leading positions, is also very important. The employment of women with more children has to be supported by the subvention and expansion of part-time jobs (currently it is not available in many sectors). During the period of child care allowance and child care benefit, women should have been provided the facility of teleworking, even by the establishment of teleworking centres, so that they have the possibility to keep pace with the changes in their profession. Day nurseries should be established and supported by tax shelters, and employers should be inspired to operate local crèches and kindergartens.

There are more and more female entrepreneurs. Nationally, 30% of the entrepreneurs are woman (KSH). Female entrepreneurs are usually motivated by creativity, independence and freedom. Due to the rapid development of internet, among the companies established by women, the number of online companies has increased. One reason for the increase of the number of online companies is, that it is much easier to start this kind of enterprise without initial capital, and this solves several problems derived from the life situation of women. The majority of female entrepreneurs have a university graduation and had previously an intellectual profession. In the beginning they considered this possibility as a must, but today they would not give up their acquired autonomy. They usually remain in the same segment where they worked before. Their enterprises were very often established intuitively, without a business plan or market research and did not have any experience in this field either. It is important for them, that the area of activity corresponds to their field of interest and they are regularly much less ambitious, than men. They usually have short-term plans and a stable business construction without lower willingness to take risk.

SUMMARY

The inappropriate performance of female employment has an influence not only on demographic changes, but on the economy as well. „During the century, following the millennium a social consensus evolved with regard to the fact, that a decision,

referring to the wide range of so called material goals in life (such as income and flat) and post material goals in life (such as hobby, own goals, job success, friends), can only be made by the reduction of the number of children.” (S. Molnár, 2011) Thus, women have to make a decision between family and career.

In my opinion with the suitable motivating macroeconomic and mesoeconomic methods an intact model can be developed, where women and men, accordingly to their life situation, can equally contribute to the economic growth and sustainability. As a thesis can be formed, that a society which will not be able to handle the situation of women on the labour market, will not be able to improve further, as they either sacrifices its future in order to improve the current employment level or it has to find a balance to a model of a working, and professionally developing woman. Experience has shown that the following measures would help the female employment: support women with children by part-time jobs; give chance to be at home office during the maintenance period on maternity leave and child care; support and promote local nurseries. My assumption at the beginning of this article is inadequate and further research needs to prove it.

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