



**Doctoral School of  
Sociology**

**THESES COLLECTION**

for the Ph.D. dissertation

of

**Zsófia Drjenovszky**

entitled

**Absence of women from the labour market after having children**

**Supervisor:**

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Associate professor

Budapest, 2009

**Institute of Sociology and Social Policy**

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# 1. Introduction

As of the beginning of the 20th century, women have been represented on the labour market in an ever growing proportion. More and more women had to make decision on whether joining the labour market or not. They have to make similar decisions when they drop out of work due to the birth of their child(ren), and they have to decide on when they are ready to return.

Thus, the topic of this thesis is the analysis of the period between quitting and returning to the labour market in the process of having children.

## 1.1. Objectives of Present Dissertation

In many cases, having a child means a decision for women – a decision between staying at home and possibly having more children or returning to work and building a career. Finding balance between maternity and work or rather maternity and career is one of the most essential problems for women. The main issue I am willing to examine in the framework of present research is as follows:

*What factors influence the length of absence from work in relation to having children?*

In order to answer the question, we need to understand how the observed group takes part in the labour market. Numerous Hungarian researches have been published on the role of women and on having children, while women's return to the labour market (after having children) has been less emphasized (e.g. Lakatos 2001, Pongráczné 2001, Spéder 2001, Köllő 2008, Bálint-Köllő 2007, 2008, Frey 2008). Present research aspires to address this hiatus. My two major objectives are as follows:

- *To discover background variables and factors related to the system of values and to other issues which may influence the length of the period spent at home.*
- *To examine how these variables change with the number of children.*

The issue I selected provides opportunity for a wide range of research, and, due to this, I was forced to narrow the subject matter of my thesis. Due to restrictions of the volume of this thesis, it is not possible to provide an international overview, I do not wish to deal with the analysis or judgement of family policy (I will, however, give a short introduction on this topic), and discussion of feminism or gender-specific issues are also excluded from my work. In my thesis, I will exclusively focus on women, and I will not analyse men's behaviour relating to the labour market. Within the group of women, I will deal with those who have

worked before giving birth to children and wish to return to the world of work; thus, I will not analyse those who have entered (but not returned to) the labour market. All topics mentioned above imply further directions for research.

## **1.2. Motivations behind the Topic:**

With my selected topic, I wish to contribute to recognizing a problem which is quite relevant these days.

Prior to planning this research, legal regulations relating to the system of family support were significantly modified as of the 1st January, 2006. One of the major changes was that mothers receive protection until their child is 3 years old, and their workplaces are obliged to employ them provided that they are willing to return. This brings up a number of difficulties as far as the employer is concerned; therefore, it would be important for them to know how long the mother would be away, and how long (and how – once the period of the absence is clear) the replacement and substitution of her position should be managed. With such knowledge, it is easier for employers to prepare for the return of mothers with babies.

During research period, the issue received even more relevance, since regulation of the examined field became a pivotal question again for government agencies. In 2009, further reforms took place, as a result of which more restrictions will come into effect as of the year 2010. One main element of this reform was to cut back the three-year subsidy period to two years, since the lengthy absence allowed by current legal regulations decreases women's presence on the labour market.

## **2. Background of Research**

### **2.1. Processes in Relation to the Issue**

In the 20th century, one of the main motivation behind employment of women was economic necessity. Considering the total income of a family, the paid activity of women became essential from the point of view of economic welfare. Demand to retain life standard which the family has been generally accustomed to encouraged women to find a job (Hoóz 1994, Óri 2001). These phenomena are not unique; such tendencies are similar in all western

industrialized societies. Proportion of women in the labour market or the length of time they spend at home with their kids respond to general and global processes. In addition, the image of women and expectations present in socialist ideology contribute to this issue in the countries of Eastern Europe (Koncz 1999, Blaskó 2006, Pongrácz–Spéder 2002).

Family life and roles within a family have dramatically changed in the past decades. Traditional roles have transformed, and in our times, general family model means that both parents have incomes (Kamarás 2003). In Hungary, double income family model has spread much earlier – compared to Western European patterns. Participation of women is also different: number of women in the labour market soared much earlier, and then, following the transition, it dropped dramatically (parallel to men’s participation).

In the 1990s, significant changes took place in Hungary as well as in the entire region of Central-Eastern Europe. This era can be characterized by the emergence of a democratic multi-party system and by a significant level of transformation in the economy. Phenomena of unemployment and inflation appeared, real wages dropped, income inequality grew, and a shift occurred in the structure of employment (Spéder 2003).

For women, the importance of work grew gradually, they spent more time with work; therefore, it was more and more difficult to find the balance between the world of work and domestic and family duties which were still significant. The main motif behind employment was financial necessity, but other environmental changes in society also played an essential role. Productivity rate decreased, and population of Hungary has been stagnating since 1980 (Őri 2001). Willingness to marry dwindled, the number of divorces increased, the age of marriage increased, and so did the number of those born outside marriage, the period before marriage and having children became longer, while the proportion of women taking part in tertiary education grew (Kamarás 2001, 2003, 2005, Pongrácz 2000, S. Molnár-Kapitány 2002, Tárkányi 2002). Prolonged absence from the labour market, which is a result of the fact that women have children, and other constraints concerning family issues became a disadvantage; therefore, plans of having children were postponed. Views relating to the employment of women also changed.

Demographic changes in the modern world and the reasons behind them are analysed by the concept of „second demographic transition” (Van de Kaa 1987, Kamarás 2005). Backing away from traditional values and norms, the spread of the importance of individualism and self-realization and the liberation from former financial, moral and sexual constraints are mentioned as reasons for such changes (Van de Kaa 2001). All these factors allow a more independent mate choice and family structure, which weaken the traditional framework of family life (Kamarás 2005). Individual career objectives came into prominence and individual

independence became more important, which were thought to be achieved by abandoning the official form of marriage and by restricting the number of children. Social trends encouraged women to enter employment. Institutional background also followed this process (e.g. how different elements of family subsidy changed over time).

## **2.2. Theoretical history**

In order to understand human behaviour and social phenomena, it is essential to be familiar with the factors influencing individual decisions as well as structural limitations. Analysing individual actions as well as structural limitations have established traditions in the way of thinking of sociology and economics.

### **2.2.1. Economic theory framework**

A feature of economic theories is that they apply simplifying conditions in their models. As far as human behaviour is concerned, they begin with „homo oeconomicus” (Andorka 2000, Coleman 1988). According to neoclassical economic theory, individuals as well as households tend to maximize profit which determines supplies of the labour market. In the interpretation of neoclassical economics examining the behaviour of women in the labour market, operations of the market, that is, participation in the labour market can be described by the movements of reservation wage and wage offered by the market (Nakamura-Nakamura 1991).

This theory evolved at the Chicago school. Basis for this new way of thinking was laid by Becker in his work „An Economic Analysis of Fertility” published in 1960. Becker (1981) is one among those who wish to explain non-economic behaviour, such as having children and marrying with the homo oeconomicus image. He traces these decisions back to rational behaviour and to the vindication of profit maximization (Andorka 2000). Advocates to the theory interpret the attitude towards children as an exogenous and given variable when analysing the attitude towards having children.

In economic analyses, children are interpreted as „ordinary goods” and are analysed similarly to the market of other products (Andorka 1987).

#### *Factors influencing women's return to work:*

Factors which influence mothers to have children are closely connected to decisions on returning to work after having children, since both decisions can be traced back to absence from the labour market (primarily through costs relating to such decisions). The issue of

staying at home and the period of this will increase lost profit and indirect costs related to children.

In the sense of economic approach, women compare the value of their time spent on the market (market/offered wage) and the value of their time spent at home (reservation wage) when making a decision on returning to the labour market. Assuming that women are completely informed and rational, they will return when the value of market wage exceeds the value of reservation wage (Becker 1965). Market wage can be influenced by many factors, such as qualifications, work experience, occupation, etc. (that is, by the accumulated human capital), while reservation fee is influenced by presence of her small child, the income of husband or family, the issue of child-sitting (since hiring an external sitter is expensive and it does not match the value of mother's care), the issue of house work (Becker 1964, Gronau 1973).

The other side of considering market wage and reservation wage is considering the opportunity costs of both aspects. When a woman returns to the labour market then opportunity costs attached to her tasks at home are for example the costs of child-sitting, cleaning lady and the fact that she can spend less time with her child. Reversely, it can also imply a loss of wage and a career break. From this aspect, women will return to work once the opportunity cost originating from this is smaller than in the case of staying at home (Becker 1965, Mincer 1962).

This theory has several pre-assumptions: on the one hand, it assumes that women are familiar with the values of these factors (and with their own opportunities, such as presence in the labour market, work at home, spending free time); and on the other hand, it also assumes that based on such factors, they can make an optimal decision.

#### *Human capital:*

Introduction of human capital into economic thinking was introduced by advocates of the Chicago school, which evolved in the 60s due to development after World War II.

Human capital includes all investments which are obtained during a lifetime. Schultz (1983) points out that such resources are not free (Garai 1998). Economists consider qualifications and work experience as the main components of human capital, since both raise positions on the labour market (Mincer-Polachek 1974). Besides, any investments which improve production, thus, the market value of a person (such as trainings, etc.) can be regarded as an investment into human capitals (Becker 1964). Schultz (1983) thinks that such investments include own time consumption (e.g. the time spent on obtaining labour market information), and the time spent on having and raising children as well (Gyekinczky 1994).



Therefore, the larger the human capital, the better the knowledge can be marketed on the labour market (Becker 1975). This means that those with larger human capitals can expect to receive more return (e.g. higher wages), which makes it more likely that the individual is willing to participate in the labour market under given labour market conditions. Employers are more willing to employ employees with more human capitals, since they are expected to be more productive (Galasi-Kőrösi 2002).

Women, however, who interrupt their presence on the labour market, have no options to obtain further human capital (e.g. work experience, trainings etc.).

### **2.2.2. Sociological approach**

Publishers of sociological and demographical studies examining women's behaviour on the labour market state that pre-assumptions of economic theory are not reliable, therefore, they are not able to properly interpret the social phenomena of real life. Contrary to economic approach, they emphasize the definiteness of structures and institutional frameworks and importance of preferences.

According to *perspectives on socialization*, one of the most important factors determining human behaviour is preferences established during childhood, since these will determine decisions in the future. Looking through this aspect, we can find the answer to women's behaviour on the labour market: some women feel stronger commitment to participating in the labour market, while others are committed to child-raising. Therefore, the relation to this decision is connected to the gender roles picked up during childhood (Sweet 1982).

The „*new structuralism*” trend, evolving in the 80s, provides a new approach. They emphasize the presence of structural limitations upon distributing available positions. When using the concept, characteristic features are presented (occupation, industry...) instead of individual characteristics (England-Farkas 1986). Structural perspectives can explain well why changes of society take such a long period of time. The established structural frameworks are relatively rigid, which encourages those in given positions to form and strengthen a type of behaviour necessary for their own positions. Individuals, however, are not only guided by structural limitations, since there is a continuous and mutual relationship between structural positions and individual characteristics (England-Farkas 1986), which may result in changes in society. Household and employment institutions also include a number of self-strengthening elements which hinder changes (England-Farkas 1986).

An other sociological approach originates from the following question: „what family and *female roles* characterise modern society, and in what way do the labour market and its transformation violate or prefer the given roles” (Spéder 2001, p. 50). According to the *role conflict theory*, having or learning more roles at the same time or the compliance to them may result in role conflicts. Role conflict appears when pressure or pressure of performance emerges from two (or more) areas, and exercising one of them will encumber the exercise of the other. It appears mainly between roles at work and in the family. According to *role accumulation theory*, double role at work and at home can have positive effects on women’s self-esteem (Crosby 1991). Two roles to be occupied may strengthen each other: if women are successful in one role, it may compensate the possible failures of the other. Similarly to this, experiences gained in one field may contribute to the other field. All these strengthen women’s mental and physical health, and increase their self-esteem which helps them successfully fulfil the requirements of both roles (Nguyen 2005).

### **3. Hypotheses of Research**

Taking theoretical considerations and earlier research experience into account, the following hypotheses have been formulated and tested empirically with regard to women’s behaviour on the labour market after having children.

H1: My first main hypothesis is that I assume that the length of mothers’ absence from work related to the birth of the first child can be explained with demographic and human capital characteristics, mothers attitude to having children and with other (family and financial) circumstances which are all directly related to mothers.

I have divided the examined variables into three groups, and I have set up my sub-hypotheses relating to these groups.

H1.1. Firstly, it can be assumed that the length of the period of time spent at home is influenced by demographic factors and by accumulation of human resources, both of which are directly related to the mother.

H1.2. Secondly, it is possible that the length of the period of time spent at home is influenced by the mother’s attitude, system of values and approach to family life and work.

H1.3. Thirdly, I will presume that the length of the period of time spent at home is influenced by miscellaneous (family and financial) circumstances existing at the moment of birth.

I have examined 7 variables related to my first, 6 variables related to my second and yet another 7 variables related to my third sub-hypothesis.

H2: My second main hypothesis is that the influencing effect of the analysed variables can differ with each new child, that is, they are different in the case of the first, second or third (etc.) born child. Therefore, I will presume that factors influencing the behaviour with the first child will be different than in case of the birth of more (second) children.

## **4. The Applied Method and its Justification**

I have examined the test of my hypotheses with the analysis two types of samples: on the one hand, I carried out a secondary analysis on a Hungarian sample, while, on the other hand, I prepared a questionnaire survey at a large national company, which was complemented by a series of interviews. I carried out my researches in three stages. With this, I wished to be able to create a picture as perfect as possible with the help of available instruments and data:

*Analysis of a sample from Hungary:* In the first stage of research, I analysed data of an already existing research. For the secondary analysis, I used TÁRKI's Háztartás Monitor (Household Monitor) survey of 2003. In spite of the fact that the topic of research itself is different from the issue that I examine, I found many pieces of information in this survey which provide an answer to my questions.

TÁRKI has been tracking structural changes of Hungarian society since 1992. Between 1992 and 1997, the survey took place within the framework of „Magyar Háztartás Panel” (Hungarian Household Panel), and the most recent survey was carried out in 2007. Between 1998 and 2001, and in 2003 and 2005, survey was conducted based on the questionnaire of „Háztartás Monitor”.

*Inquiry at a large national company (questionnaire survey):* The survey mentioned above failed to cover many aspects of issues to be analysed by me; therefore, in the second stage of my research, I conducted an individual survey with a narrower and more specific

group as a complement to the secondary analysis. This research took place with the help of a questionnaire for the entire group.

*Inquiry at a large national company (interview survey):* Finally, in the third stage, I prepared interviews with people selected from among the ones who filled in the questionnaire. With this, I fine-tuned the results of my first two (quantitative) analyses with qualitative information.

My research at the company was basically of discovering nature, it focussed on a narrow group. Survey carried out with a small sample, however, made exact fact-finding possible, and, due to the information obtained from the interviews, it also provided deep-drilling for better understanding.

Quantitative data analysis of both samples was carried out with the help of SPSS statistical analysis software. Results of the two analyses were consolidated and then evaluated. Analysis was performed using multiple methods, while my hypothesis was tested with statistical devices listed below:

a, First of all, I presented the characteristics of the analysed variables in the framework of a descriptive analysis.

b, In the second stage, I tested the relation between the selected independent variables and the analysed dependent variable (period of time spent away from work in the case of the given child).

c, After this, I used factor analysis to classify explanatory variables.

d, As a last step of the analysis, I used regression analysis to define which independent variables can best explain the length of the period of time spent away from work when giving birth to their kids.

e, At the end of my analysis, I will examine if there is a difference between explanatory variables in respect of the number of children, that is, I want to find out if the results are different in the case of a first and a second child's birth.

The following independent variables have been used for analysis in accordance with the established hypotheses

- Group of variables no. 1.: Demographic factors directly related to the mother and the accumulation of human resources: age (when the child is born), age of marriage, marital status, qualifications, work experience, position and wage.

- Group of variables no. 2.: Mother's attitude, system of values and approach towards family life and work: maternal role, sexuality, career, satisfaction, number of planned children, difficulties.
- Group of variables no. 3.: Miscellaneous circumstances (family, financial) existing during the period spent at home: income, qualifications, position of spouse, and their participation in home duties, child-sitting, workplace, family subsidy.

## 5. Statements of Dissertation

1, Starting with the assumption that women's behaviour is determined by direct demographic characteristics and the extent of accumulation of human capitals, I shall presume that these influence the length of the period of time spent at home with the child. I received the following results when analysing the related sub-hypotheses.

*The older a woman is when her child is born, the sooner she will return to the labour market:* My presumed hypothesis does not seem to be justified either in the first or in the second research. Age has hardly any influence on the length of the period of time spent at home – neither in the case of the first, nor in the case of the second child. Mixed results do not support human capital theory, in the interpretation of which, older women with more accumulated human capital – which at the same time is subject to a more serious devaluation during a longer period of time spent at home (e.g. it may be more difficult to continue the already achieved career path) – tend to return sooner. The idea that the accumulation of more human capital provides safer grounds to stay home for a longer period of time may as well be true, and the interview survey supports this idea in a large number of cases. Older women, who have brought work and career in the forefront until now, may feel that it is time to experience how maternity is like. By this time, they probably managed to create financial circumstances with the help of which they can afford to spend a bit longer period of time at home.

*Late marriage is in positive relationship with return to the labour market, that is, women will stay at home for a shorter period of time:* I could test my hypothesis in the second sample. In the case of the first child, my research did not show unambiguous correlation; therefore, I had to drop my hypothesis in this case. In the case of the decision to have a second child, however, the statement seems to be true. Many think that children can be had only after marriage. The later the marriage, the more the birth of the second child is postponed and the more difficult it is to break away from the career built up earlier. Or, if the mother

does not return to work between the births of the two children, then she may feel that her time spent at home is too long, and the loss originating from e.g. the lost wage will be higher and higher.

*Women living with their partners as well as those raising their child alone will aspire to return to paid activities sooner than those living in a marriage:* Since the majority of women in both analysed samples were married, this statement was difficult to justify or deny. In spite of this, research was carried out which mostly supports the statement mentioned above in the case of the first child, but it has no effect once the second child is born. (This latter finding seems a bit strange, since having an other child puts an even bigger financial and mental burden on a woman. Antinomic results may be the consequence of the quite low item count of those living alone or in a common-law marriage.) Thus, accuracy of the statement supports the assumption that those living in marriages have more traditional systems of values which may have a positive effect on the length of time spent at home, as opposed to those living in common-law marriages, who follow modern trends (they say that paid work is a part of women's life due to e.g. financial reasons or because of the common approach of roles). At the same time, it seems to be justified that women living with partners and having larger human resources allow longer period of time for themselves to be spent at home after giving birth than those living alone.

*Women with higher qualifications will return to the labour market sooner:* Summarizing research carried out with the two samples, the above statement is justified in the case of the first as well as in the case of the second child. (It is true, however, that significance was not obvious in the case of the second sample with one child). Results back up neoclassical theory, according to which indirect costs of having children are higher in the case of those with higher qualifications, which usually goes together with higher income and economic activity. This implicates the loss of wage, for example, but at the same time there is a higher intellectual need to work again. (In spite of all this, the tendency is reversed in the first few months spent at home, according to the findings of the first research. The reason for this might be that in the case of those with lower qualifications, return can be quite urgent, since in their case, amount of subsidy is also low.) Therefore, results contradict previous research results according to which women with higher qualifications can afford a longer period of time to be spent at home, due to their accumulated reserves and resources.

*The longer the period of time spent with work before having children, the sooner the mother will return to work:* No research has justified the presumed hypothesis; therefore, it is necessary to reject it. Effects of work experience differ from individual to individual. Some feel that their human resources accumulated during a longer period of time spent at work will

rather establish a basis for spending a longer period time at home, while others say that greater devaluation of human capital would encourage them to return as soon as possible. The opinion that a longer period of time spent away is disliked, therefore, it does not matter how much you have worked, is also present. Thus, we can conclude that results do not support the theory of the Chicago school, but rather maintain mixed results of earlier research.

*Women in higher positions will return to the labour market sooner:* My first research backs up my presumption. In the interpretation of human capital theory, greater (accumulated) human capital factors are attached to position (e.g. wage, career path), which will also increase the cost of time alternative spent away from the labour market. In the case of employees in associate ranks, position has no influencing effect. (Due to lack of data, my hypothesis could not be tested in the case of the second child).

*Women with higher incomes will return to work sooner after giving birth to their child:* Little influence does wage have in the case of the first child, it becomes more significant once the second child is born. Results support human capital theory again, since the higher a woman's income the higher the lost income of the family. Experience of present research confirms earlier national research in the respect that in spite of all this, women questioned judge the issue of their loss of income as less critical. It seems to be justified that effects of the mother's loss of income are less prevalent in the beginning. Later, however, the effects grow stronger, particularly if she is at home with her second child without interruption. (In this case as well, the tendency is reversed in the first six months: on the one hand, in the case of women with higher incomes, families have more accumulated reserves; on the other hand, the sum of family subsidy is only significantly less than the original wage during the period of GYÁS (confinement benefit).)

2, In addition to the ideas presented so far, mothers' attitude and approach can have similar influence on the decision (the period of time spent at home); therefore, these factors are also worth considering. In the following section, I will present the evaluation of the results received.

*Positive approach to maternity will increase the time spent at home:* In the case of the first child, the statement is true; however, it is not significant in the case of the second one. It becomes apparent from research that maternal duties are of primary importance for mothers currently staying at home – the most important thing is to achieve a truly „traditional” maternal role. In the course of time, this feeling grows stronger in a group of mothers, who stay at home for a long time or forever. For others, however, this is an intermittent state. As economic analyses have pointed out, many are not satisfied with the traditionally accepted

responsibilities of women in the long run. A more modern approach to the role appears, in which work also has its share. In these cases, role accumulation theory seems to be confirmed, in the interpretation of which balanced mother is somebody who has the chance to prove her qualities at work as well. (In addition, traditional approach is also present in these families, since duties related to children will be performed by women primarily.)

*Women with a more modern approach will return to the labour market sooner after having a child:* The statement has been proved to be rather true with regard to the first child, and this was one of the most important aspects when analysing the case of a second child. Traditional approach to role is strongly present in families questioned; however, there were two groups in the case of taking such roles for a longer period: women with more traditional approach wish to spend more time with their kids in the long run, and it is acceptable for them that their husband is basically the wage-earner, their task is to manage the household. Those who could afford would take motherhood as a full-time job, but the double income family model, which is more dominant these days, will force them to return sooner or later. According to the majority, however, significance of earlier roles became weaker, tasks of women and men approximate each other in many areas. Based on this, socialization theory can only partially stand its ground. Women's role in society is changing, and this change shows a more liberal gender role orientation than earlier: it rather points at equality at home as well as in the field of career opportunities.

*Return will take place sooner for those who consider career important:* My assumption has been justified in relation to the birth of the first as well as the second child. This confirms earlier Hungarian research results. Most women are satisfied with what they managed to achieve at work before having a child. The desire to have a career would require so much energy that it would go at the expense of family life. In spite of this, the role of self-realization and intellectual activity in addition to household responsibilities are important for them as well; therefore, they are willing to work again – and usually not only because of financial reasons. This, by itself, would not advance return, except in the cases of those who have achieved significant success at work, and are more attached to their workplace and are afraid that their lengthy absence would break their career nurtured previously. Taking human resources theory as basis, the explanation of this is that the long time spent at home will devaluate the knowledge relating to professional career the most (e.g. organization-specific knowledge, connections etc.). This difference will grow stronger after approximately two years of absence. By this time, mothers usually feel that it is time to go on with their regular life.



*The more satisfied a woman is with her job, the less time she will spend at home in the period after giving birth:* The presumed correlation has been proved to be true in relation to the birth of the first as well as the second child. According to the concept of the second „demographic transition”, individual goals have come to the forefront in the last few decades, and individual independence has become more significant. For a number of women, work is of essential importance and a part of self-realization – they would continue pursuing it even if it was not absolutely necessary. (The result may correlate to the fact that the ratio of women with higher education degrees was rather high in the sample. Women with degrees are more likely to find personal satisfaction in their work than those with lower qualifications.)

*The more children a woman plans to have, the less she will want to return to her work:* This statement is unambiguously correct in both analysed cases. Plans to have children decrease the intention to take part in the labour market. Earlier researches have come to the same conclusion. (Opinions in the interviews, from which it turns out that many would like to have three children, but finally a family model of two children is realized, also correlate to earlier survey.)

*Women’s fears relating to the difficulties of starting to work encourage sooner return:* In no cases can an unambiguous tendency be outlined in respect of this variable. The reason for this may be the complex nature of the issue, as a result of which, wording was not obvious. Interviews show that surveyed aspects are important, however, they appear with other analysed variables.

3, In the third stage of my analysis, I analysed external circumstances which can have further influences on mothers’ decisions in addition to the factors directly related to them. In order to prove that the time women spend at home can be influenced by a number of such factors, I set up a number of sub-hypotheses.

*The higher the men’s income, the smaller the motivation for women to return to paid activities:* The influence of the father’s income is justified in the case of the first child, and it seems to be one of the most important aspects. In the case of the second child, however, insignificant results have been received. Justification of this statement reconfirms the results of earlier researches, and points out the idea that if a man is capable of providing proper financial circumstances for his family, then contribution of the mother to the family budget is less necessary; therefore, her return to work is not urgent. From the interviews examining background reasons, it turns out that hiring expensive child-sitting services so that the mother can return to work does not provide a better alternative for a family with better financial status either. In the first years, mothers’ care is considered to be pricelessly more valuable.

Taking mothers' income into consideration, we can clearly see that women's ability to earn more has a positive correlation, while men's ability to earn more has a negative correlation to women's employment. Furthermore, it has also turned out that women's incomes are more and more prevalent, while husbands' incomes are less and less so in the course of time, which justifies the approach specified in economic theories as well. This explains my results which I have received in relation to the second child.

*The higher the men's qualification, the later the return will take place:* This assumption has not been justified in my researches. Men's qualifications have no influence on how long mothers stay at home.

*The higher the men's position, the later the return is expected to take place:* This correlation is correct only in relation to the first child, it is not significant in the case of the second one. Marriage homogamy, that is men with higher qualifications married more educated women, is characteristic in the sample. The relevant theory, however, seems to be disproved, that is, in case of husbands with higher employment status women will sooner return to the labour market (also due to the accumulation of high human capital). On the contrary, research agrees with studies according to which husbands in higher positions can provide better existence (at least financial existence) for women to stay at home. The question why husbands' positions have no influence in the case of the second child can be explained by the idea that women's desires in connection to self-realization usually come to the forefront by this time, and she will return to work in spite of the fact that she is not forced to do so.

*In the case of a more intense participation of the husband at home, women spend less time away from work:* All in all, the examined aspect has no effect on the length of the time spent at home in either case. Therefore, it may seem that despite the fact that husbands' support and help are useful and makes everyday life easier, it is not a dominant factor when considering return. It is true that roles of the two genders shift towards balance compared to the earlier situation, which generally encourages women to participate in the labour market. Most of the women questioned say that husbands are supportive helping relatively much in the household, although, taking everything into account, this does not advance return.

*Those for whom appropriate child-sitting is more available go back to work sooner:* Although it seems that child-sitting is extraordinarily important for women from the aspect of the length of time spent at home, its relevance is not justified in the case of the first or the second child. Majority of those questioned provided the most extensive answers on this topic. Most women who are willing to return to the world of paid work will face the difficulties of child-sitting, and they mention this as one of the key factors during the interviews. In spite of this, this factor does not seem to be significant throughout the statistical analysis, and

interviews reveal that in cases of emergencies, child-sitting can always be solved, despite the fact that the solution is not necessarily ideal. Explanation for apparently contradicting analytic results is that finding the ideal child-sitting solution does not really encourage earlier return until the child is two or three years old (until which time, most opinions say, children should be with their mothers). When, however, it is time to return, solving the issue of child-sitting becomes the most essential question, and where this factor cannot be solved, the decision on return may be postponed.

*Women who have the opportunity to have some type of atypical form of employment tend to return to the world of work earlier:* Contrary to the assumptions, however, alternative opportunities have no influence on return in the interpretation of statistical analysis. The result may be surprising, and the explanation is given in the interviews. Flexibility of their workplace is of outstanding importance from the aspect of young mothers' return, since it greatly helps coordination of home and work duties, and thus decreases possible role conflicts. However, in accordance with the above findings, many do not wish to return at all until their child is two (or three) years old. It has an effect on the time only when the decision on the return has been made. In this case, however, it becomes apparent that once mothers start to work, they would like to choose an atypical form and not a full-time job.

*The more important the sum of family subsidy, the sooner the mother will return:* My assumption is correct for the first as well as the second child. A smaller group appears on which it has no influence, but it is a critical aspect for those who are influenced by this factor. Based on analysis, this is one of the most important influencing factors. Based on the interviews, we can state that the main dividing line for those women who had a job and a wage earlier is the termination of the child-care fee grant. This is the period when the decrease of women's income can really be felt. Besides this, however, rate of those who exhaust the three-year protection and subsidy period provided by law is still high.

## 6. Summary of Results and Conclusion

As a result of research, we can clearly state that all three groups have influence on how long mothers stay at home with their children. Based on the regression model prepared with the inclusion of all variables, the first group has the weakest influencing factor (H1.1.: demographic factors directly related to the mother and the accumulation of human resources). The third group has more influence (H1.3.: miscellaneous (family and financial) circumstances existing at the moment of birth), but the second group of variables has the most serious influence on the decision (H1.2.: the mother's attitude, system of values and approach towards family life and work).

H1.: Thus, the summary of results revealed that most analysed variables provide answer to the length of the time mothers stay at home after the birth of their child. In the case of the first child, absence from the labour market correlates to marital status, and is in negative relation to the mother's qualifications, position, income, her approach to gender roles, her relation to career, her satisfaction with work and the sum of family subsidy. The correlation is positive as far as the relation to maternal roles, the number of planned children and the income and position of the husband are concerned.

First data analysis (which focused on the first group of variables exclusively) revealed that income and qualifications of the mother have the strongest influence: the higher the salary or qualifications of a woman, the sooner she will return to the labour market after giving birth. Influence of marital status is also important, in the interpretation of which, married women spend the longest time at home.

From results of the second survey (which reviewed all three groups of variables), we can conclude that the length of time is primarily influenced by attitude to career. The more important the previously achieved career for a woman (and the pursuing thereof), the shorter time she will spend at home with their first child once they are born. Furthermore, the sum of family subsidy is of outstanding significance (and the gradually decreasing sum thereof). In families where received subsidy is quite important due to financial situation, mothers will return to the world of work sooner. In addition, income and position of the father will also have significant influence, since if these variables are high then there are smaller motivations for women to return to paid work.

H2.: My second main hypothesis, however, was only partially justified. In the view of the number of children, I found out that stress shifts to an extent as far as influencing factors

are concerned, but they have not entirely changed. In the case of the second child, the number of planned children is brought into prominence, which has a strong negative effect on the willingness to return. Presence of traditional approach to roles becomes important (this will also encourage a longer stay at home), and so does the age of marriage, in the interpretation of which the later the mother is married, the earlier the return is expected to take place.

An interesting finding of research is that the possibility of the solution of the suitable child-sitting and the favourable method of employment (part-time work, telework, etc.) is a critical issue when going back to work, the presence thereof does not encourage an earlier return by itself before the child is two years old.

When assessing results, it is generally worth mentioning that in the case of more variables, the effect grows stronger at around the second year only. The reason for that is that ideal return for most mothers is around the time when their child is two (or three) years old; any other circumstances have much smaller effect earlier.

Primary experience of my dissertation is that strong family and child-orientation is a characteristic feature of parents (which confirms findings of earlier national researches), at the same time they have to face a number of difficulties when making a decision on the mother's return to the labour market. Families consider mother's continuous presence until the child is old enough to attend kindergarten. This approach is rooted deeply, and it is widely accepted, therefore, any intention to change this can only have an effect in the long run.

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