

LYČIŲ STUDIJOS

More of a Father, or More of an Employee? The Conditions of Working Men Raising Children in Poland

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The qualitative study, conducted in 2016, was divided to explore the respondents' perceptions on balance between their roles as employees and as parents, as well as the similarities and differences between their expectations and experiences. Using data collected from semi-structured, single-person interviews with 27 fathers of young children, living in Warsaw, Poland, we identify and explore ways in which the participants construct their description of the work-life balance, especially in the perspective of family obligations.

By analyzing the data on the work-life balance, our study makes a unique contribution to the literature by drawing attention to the circumstances of how fathers deal with everyday decisions, some living in families with partnership relations, and how it pertains to their attitudes in terms of being fathers while failing or managing the work-life balance. The moment of family life cycle (e.g. just married couple, couple with small children, couple with teenagers, etc.) particularly the experiences of fatherhood, illustrates the different narratives of respondents. Our findings show the demand for implementing more flexibility of work into the employment market, which is especially important for parents.

Keywords: *fathering, professional life, work-life balance, employment models, Poland.*

Introduction

Right up until the late 1970s, the family and professional life were considered two separate forms of activity. Researchers believed these to be two separate worlds, complete with their different sets of rules, mentalities and behaviors. Consequently,

to such a theoretical approach, studies of professional life did not consider the theme of employees' family lives, with the reverse true as well. Only toward the end of the 20th century was it actually admitted that the two fields interact, events in one impacting developments in the other.

Such findings yielded the development of research focusing on the abovedescribed area of human activity, the most common purpose of such research involving a quest for the mechanisms of interconnections between the professional and family lives (Lachowska 2012; Lachowska 2013).

Contemporarily, it has become somewhat of a banality to claim that changes in the employment structure, with a greater female participation in the labour market, have brought change to the non-professional lives of individuals, family lives in particular. In a semblance to the concept of the blending of professional and private lives, in this area, too, most of the studies have been focused on analyzing the two fields in women's lives exclusively. It should concurrently be accentuated that the respective domains of professional and family lives are of major importance in men's lives as well. In contrast to women – who tend to define their femininity in terms of maternity and family by emphasizing their daily participation therein rather than the possession thereof – men define their masculinity in terms of their professional life and *having* a family (Kwiatkowska, Nowakowska 2006). Men consider the fact of being able to warrant their families' livelihood hugely important, this being actually possible thanks to occupational activity. This is why men-fathers identify their professional careers as sources of personal satisfaction.

On the other hand, the development of a personal professional career may well clash with delivering family responsibilities, especially those of a husband and a father. Employers perceive men as persons assuring one hundred percent availability, capable of full commitment to professional duties, as opposed to women. Furthermore, the reality of women being more involved

in household chores and caring for children is a socially acceptable fact – whereas men ought to focus on providing the financial means required to support their families. Contemporarily, fathers are increasingly more often involved in family life and raising children, which makes them as prone as women to the threat of imbalance between professional and family life.

In the 20th century, safeguarding the balance between the two areas of life has become a major dilemma of working parents. Stanisława Borkowska points out that the work-life balance is achieved when “work does not appropriate non-professional life, an individual's leisure time in particular, and when the reverse is true as well, i.e. when non-professional life does not impact work” (Borkowska 2010). The essence of the work-life balance requires a perception of the two domains of human life as complementary rather than standing in contradiction (Gotowska 2014). Tomaszewska-Lipiec adds to this, saying that

“[p]rofessional development constitutes an integral part of personal development, and a major ingredient of holistically approached human biography. Consequently, it cannot be analysed separately from personal development, as during a specific period in human life both are simultaneous, interacting and continuously affecting each other. Thus, professional development cannot be considered in negligence of non-professional life, the latter a vital determinant of human existence, work notwithstanding” (Tomaszewska-Lipiec 2014).

The theme of the work-life balance or a potential work-life conflict in the life of Polish fathers constituted an area explored as part of a pilot study titled *The Contemporary Father – at the Crossroads of Expectations and Reality*. The purpose of this paper is to analyze data collected in the course of

the study, comprising fathers' own accounts with regard to time management and the extent of their involvement in professional and domestic/family life. To verify a hypothesis assuming that contemporary fathers from the Warsaw agglomeration experience work-family conflicts, respondents answered questions focusing on both aspects of their lives, the interrelation between the two as well as the time required for personal involvement in duties associated with each respective field.

Research Methodology

The study covered the period of April through July 2017 and was handled by a research team including employees of the Institute of Sociology of the Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw (Olga Kotowska-Wójcik, Ph.D., Anna Linek, Ph.D., Marta Luty-Michalak, Ph.D., Joanna Wróblewska-Skrzek, Ph.D.). Twenty-nine structured in-depth interviews were held. The survey comprised men resident in Warsaw in complete families, supporting at least one child above the age of 12 months. The purpose of the study was to tentatively verify the issues tied to the broadly comprehended work-life balance concept, i.e., achieving an equilibrium between professional and family life as perceived by fathers in the Warsaw agglomeration. The chief methodological goal of qualitative research involved tool testing and the substantive processing of research results as the foundation for the main study.

Studies conducted in the related fields suggest that in the case of individuals representing the 1950–1990 birthdate groups, men's perceptions are more traditional, and change is slower with regard to the modification of social roles in the public

space and in families as well as with regard to childcare. An analysis of data collected as part of the *Generations, Families, and Cultural Gender* questionnaire study (GGS-PL-1), held in Poland at the turn of 2010 and 2011, points to the following significant correlates of beliefs concerning an equal female-male status: "education, place of residence, and religiousness; conversely, professional activity, marital status, and the number of children were recognised as important far less frequently than expected. Family home parameters (mother's education, place of residence, religiousness, number of siblings) are also vital predictors of beliefs concerning cultural female and male roles, regardless of the birthdate cohort" (Kotowska 2014). Consequently, as a research team, we asked the following question: Can "fathers of young children" be a generation defining a major change to such beliefs?

The survey was designed as qualitative in view of its supplementary analytical values and contextual approach, both crucial to hypothesis verification in a pilot study and to critical research tool analysis, in terms of formal and content scopes alike. Any qualitative research methodology emphasizes the essence and dominant meaning of non-content aspects of all empirical material collected.

The gathered empirical material was duly transcribed, however there is no methodological obligation to do so. While some sources recommend it, others do not cite such a requirement at all (particularly if the material under analysis is replayed with the use of such tools as AUDACITY, Atlas.ti, or NVivo, for example – allowing parts of interview recordings to be labelled). As Joanna Bielecka-Prus reports on the analysis of the necessity to transcribe in a dedicated

paper (Bielecka-Prus 2015), there is no need to repeat her findings herein. Nonetheless, in semblance to the afore-quoted author, we believe transcription to extend beyond the automatic or technical recording of an interview; in particular, if a study is handled by a research team, and if the empirical material was collected by more than one individual, a detailed recording allows for substantive content to be uniformed and clarified with the use of elements that enable a better comprehension of and a reflection on the context of an interview and its atmosphere (uniform methods of recording audio elements); this, in turn, yields more profound theoretical reflections.

The study involved naturalized transcription, i.e., featuring the means of expression natural to the course of the actual conversation, including all errors, repetitions, deviations, stammering etc. Working as a team, we made every possible effort not to lose any of the data collected at this stage of processing the empirical material. To that end, it was decided that – circumstances permitting – the following elements would be recognised, among others: contextual features, such as pauses or natural conversation fillers (assertions, reflection-accompanying sound effects, etc.), para-linguistic components (longer pauses, significant gestures, inhalations, other body language elements) and contextual properties (changes in sound intensity or speech tone etc.). Furthermore, we considered recordings of other sound effects impacting the course of the conversation valuable (e.g., the voices of third persons, sounds of the environment disturbing or altering the course of the conversation etc.). The transcript records all supplementary utterances by interviewed persons as well as external dispersions. This allowed the

publication to include authentic quotes from respondents, adding indubitable value to the presented analysis.

Snowball sampling was applied, in recognition of all features as indicated. Over the period of April until July 2017, 32 structured in-depth interviews (IDIs) were held, 29 of which qualified for analysis purposes: consequently, the collected empirical material concerns men resident in Warsaw in complete families, supporting at least one child above the age of 12 months. Apart from the abovementioned features that are key to sample selection, the respondents were requested to provide other social and demographic features to complete the analysis and description of the group of fathers under analysis. We thus obtained the following information for the majority of our survey respondents: age, place of birth, number of siblings (if any), education, occupation, employment form, net earnings, subjective evaluation of the family's financial standing, place of residence, whether one is a resident with any other dependents (parents, grandparents etc.), the number and age of children, relationship status (marriage, cohabitation), the number of years in a relationship, both partners' attitude to religious faith, joint religious practice and whether the religious matters are talked about with the children.

Twenty-seven approved responses were taken into consideration, and the questions were concerned with shared life, individual relationships spanning 3 to 19 years. Half of the respondents have been in a lasting relationship with their current partners for over 11 years. The average relationship span for the group totals nearly 10 years. The denomination was bi-modal (with two identical values): most fathers have been in a relationship with their current partner for

11 or 12 years. The group was not diverse in terms of this particular feature.

While the survey group was strongly dominated by persons from Warsaw or its neighbourhoods (20 fathers having listed such as their place of birth), it also comprised men born in the Świętokrzyskie, Podkarpackie, Lubelskie, Zachodniopomorskie and Silesian voivodships. Consequently, it may be concluded that most men have had permanent ties to Warsaw and can potentially be assisted by their closest family members. This variable may have affected the decisions regarding their places of residence and the fact of sharing a flat/house with (a) family member(s).

The group was rather dispersed age-wise: the surveyed men were aged 20 to 51, half no less than 37. The largest group (10 fathers) were aged 36 to 41. The feature is bi-modal: two groups of 4 fathers comprised 36- and 41-year-olds, respectively. The average age of the surveyed persons was 38; it can thus be concluded that the respondents' age was conducive to higher education levels (all were of typical university graduate age) and professional stability.

Education-wise, men with higher education (21, including an occasional post-graduate) dominated. Seven respondents declared secondary school education. The group included one vocational school graduate.

Respondents found the form of employment question the most intricate one. Men with regular employment contracts (commonly referred to as full-time employment), 17 out of 29, dominated; yet another 5 declared to be permanently as well as self-employed. Most commonly, such circumstances are due to the related employer preferences. Such a solution has allowed the respondents to generate higher income

while enjoying higher employment stability (in their opinion). Seven fathers declared to be self-employed only, their circumstances usually tying in with the benefits associated with such a form of employment (working hours, earnings, place of work on occasion) rather than the type of occupation.

An analysis of earnings allows a conclusion that the net income generated by the respondents is hugely diverse in the group. The difference between the lowest and highest earner in the respondents' group was ten-fold. PLN 2 000 and PLN 20 000 per month were the minimum and maximum parameter values declared. While the respondent earnings averaged at PLN 6 596.42, one-half of all respondents make no more than PLN 6 000.00 – this was also the parameter's dominant (most frequently declared value). Questions concerning the respondents' income comprised an enquiry as to the respondents' subjective evaluation of the financial standing of their families. The majority of surveyed fathers described their financial standing as favorable (13 respondents), with a further 9 and 7 weighing it up as excellent and average, respectively.

Attitude to religious faith was another feature essential from the viewpoint of research objectives. The studied group was not significantly diverse in terms of this particular parameter: 27 men declared to be believers; more importantly, 10 described themselves as non-churchgoing believers. Only 2 survey participants responded in the negative to the question if they were believers.

It seems that the non-occupational (private) life area is of major significance to men because of the conviction that they are responsible for supporting their families. The sense of responsibility for securing the

family's livelihood is not due to the assignment of family roles as specifically defined in the socialization phase. Eugenia Mandal believes that men are socialized to begin working at a very early stage of their childhood (Mandal 2000). Teaching boy's independence and thus enabling them to support their families in the future is a major part of the process (Chmura-Rutkowska, Ostrouch 2007). As of the early days of their childhood, they are encouraged to develop creativity and problem-solving abilities, self-control and crossing the boundaries of their own capacities. Demonstrating weakness, empathy or emotionality is not well-received. Even teachers treat boys differently at school, often by not giving them assignments that would require them to be more active but bolster their logical, rational and abstract thinking capabilities.

The traditional primary socialization process is further enhanced by the mass media and society. Men are expected to be efficient, effective in target orientation and task delivery, success-fixated, self-confident, and swift in action. Conversely, women are traditionally perceived as intuitive, empathetic, understanding and focused on interpersonal relations. They should also be modest, doubt their own capacity and engage in offensive action only. Such patterns of socialization produce men that are much more competitive than women later in life. They are also more professional success- and career-oriented than women, who consider family life as equally, if not more important than work (Chmura-Rutkowska, Ostrouch 2007). Yet while a certain change may be noticed in terms of the education of the younger generation, the survey participants were brought up more traditionally, which is why they have a higher propensity to sense conflict between the expectations

they are facing and belief in the spirit of their upbringing.

Henryk Domański believes the clear distinction between the typically "male" and "female" roles to be socially functional, and a source of two zones of human activity in society having been formed. The former involves the home – also referred to as the private sphere – historically and culturally attributed to women. The other is public, tying in with the professional, public, out-of-home activities generating income; this one has traditionally been associated with men. Such a distinction ties in with the aforementioned features recognized as male and female, respectively. Such task-orientation and instrumentalism have resulted in the public realm being perceived as typically male, relationship fixation and expressiveness recognised as chief factors in assigning women to private life areas (Kwiatkowska, Nowakowska 2006).

Talcott Parsons is another author pointing to such differentiation of roles; he believes that families are conducive to distinction between typically male and typically female functions. Such a distinction is conditioned by qualities assigned to men and women, respectively. Men are usually perceived through the prism of such instrumental traits as strength, domination, aggression or rivalry, all defined as key attributes to efficiency on the labour market and the ability to support a family. The woman, on the other hand, should put her congenital emotionality to use by being responsible for providing her family members with warmth and love; this makes the home her dominion. Consequently, according to Talcott and other functionalists, differences between the respective family and social roles carried by women and men are due to biological distinctions. In view of her capacity for

pregnancy and breastfeeding, the woman is able to generate stronger bonds with her children, making her the better performer in private (home) life. Under such circumstances, the man is forced out into public territory, which is why he will engage in work outside home (Suwada 2015).

Yet the functionalists' approach is far from universal. Following the industrial revolution, men switched from working the fields to labouring in the industry, which is when the traditional family model began domineering. The industrial revolution made professional work and activity in public space a thing of men – and the essence of their identity – throughout most of the 19th and 20th centuries. The male status was developed against work-based gender. Since men spent increasingly more time out of home (for occupational reasons), they began pushing their families into the background, women shouldering all household chores and duties (Polkowska 2014). Traditional male role models were described with the use of such phrases as “breadwinner,” “head of the family,” “strict educator,” “representative of public authority” (Chmura-Rutkowska, J. Ostrouch 2009).

The belief that men are the main breadwinners in the family remains common in Poland. The country accepts the traditional family model, wherein the man is responsible for financial affairs, the woman's professional work no more than a supplement to the family budget. Such belief may be illustrated by the respondents' statements concerning the contemporary requirements of men-fathers:

“To a large extent, the man is obliged to secure sufficient material conditions for the family to be able to put the proverbial dinner on the table – and this is kind of the most important thing. Securing some kind of dwelling, peace, that cave for the family,

a safe place on the planet, comes second. I think those are at the top of the list.” [R16, 39; 11, 10¹]

“In general, just caring for their family, really. Nothing more, by and large.” [R 24, 22; 3, 15 months]

Apart from the need to secure a livelihood for their families, most survey respondents pointed to the father's involvement in family life and raising children; this indicates that the family is becoming an increasingly important element in the lives and of the identities of contemporary men. Yet their perception of monetary affairs coming first continues, as proven by the following responses to the question concerning the contemporary requirements they are facing:

“Professional requirements, in terms of supporting the family on the one hand, blend in with what you face on the other: family, emotional requirements associated with raising and spending time with children.” [R1, 46; 10, 4]

“They have to make money, and in their time off, they should take care of children, e.g., take them to and collect them from kindergarten, while taking care of the condition of the flat and of the bank account.” [R2, 30; 2.5; 1]

“Financial independence on the one hand; a kind of macho, one might say, and a gentle, warm, sensitive guy on the other; taking care of his children and family – a 360-degree father. It's no longer just about bringing money home, but also about soft skill areas, one might say, round-the-clock care.” [R3, 36; 5.5; 3.5]

“Requirements are shifting in a specific direction: they should not only be persons making money to support their families and getting involved in ways typical for the

¹ Description of the respondent, in the following order: father's age, children's ages. In this case: respondent no. 16, age: 39, children's ages: 10, 11 years.

past – that is remaining responsible for most of all the financial needs – because I believe such a stereotype of men is followed by the majority of our society as the only correct one; whereas I think that contemporary men should today be involved in family life as well, be role models for these young new users of society, while being part of their families, something which is not always easy.” [R6, 35; 5, 8 months, 8 months]

“Primarily, today’s men-fathers are required to be responsible for supporting the family and caring for children, securing a reasonable existence so that nobody lacks anything – the children, the family and the wife; in general, fathers are responsible for raising children and being role models.” [R9, 32; 5; 1.5]

In numerous cases, professional life was an area some respondents felt most comfortable with; when asked which of the requirements they face they find the easiest to satisfy, they responded:

“Making money and supporting my family, because I have a well-paid job.” [R20, 43; 15]

“I find it the easiest to perform financially, because I put all my energy into guaranteeing financial security to my family, and I am left with little energy to spend time with my family and children, playing and the like.” [R2, 30; 2.5; 1]

“I have a good job that brings good money, so I can handle these material issues, that works. Whenever possible, I also try to satisfy my children’s and family’s emotional needs as best I can.” [R3, 36; 5.5; 3.5]

“Well, maybe because I put all of myself into my work, so it’s the first one.” [R16, 39; 11,10]

“It seems that supporting my family, yes, that’s it.” [R22, 27; 6, 3]

Notwithstanding the above, this is not to say that men abandon household chores or child-raising responsibilities altogether:

a certain group of fathers emphasized that they find meeting such obligations to be the easiest, which suggests a change toward more partnership-based relations in Polish families:

“I think that helping at home is the easiest: shopping or cleaning... I have no major issues here.” [R5, 37; 11, 4]

“Shopping; my job makes it easy to shop, I also help my wife with the child. Cleaning is a bit more difficult, as I have problems with cleaning while taking care of the child, but I think I manage all the other stuff well.” [R4, 34, 3]

“I think I have no problems there, and I’m happy to take on duties tying in with raising the child. Well, because the child, usually at home the child comes first, and at our home, the child does come first, and there are many obligations connected with the child, the child’s education is taking up much time in terms of these obligations. So, such stuff, education-related duties, I deal with them on a regular basis and I enjoy it.” [R14, 40; 14]

Yet some respondents emphasized that occasionally they find it difficult to manage all the requirements they are faced with. On the one hand, as accentuated before, they feel responsible for supporting their families; on the other, they are expected to be loving, tender, and gentle, and participate in delivering all family and household responsibilities as well as raising children:

“Being the father, the emotional, present, responsible, conscious person is the most difficult challenge of all.” [R1, 46; 10, 4]

“I find it most difficult to meet my wife’s expectations when it comes to spending time with the family. This is where I have the greatest time shortages – and the greatest strength and energy shortages – to satisfy my children’s needs to play, their needs for understanding, patience and energy for studying and playing.” [R2, 30; 2.5; 1]

Notably, men found it easiest to perform tasks they considered the simplest:

“Collecting them from and taking to school or kindergarten is not that complicated, right? So that, I think.” [R11, no data available; 7; 1.5]

“The stuff I find interesting is the easiest. That’s when I have no other things to do on my schedule, that’s what I find the simplest, it’s difficult to describe it in detail... This is what I think: the time I spend with my son, that’s the most pleasant thing of all, I think, when I take him to some kind of practice, when he goes to play ball, or when we go to the cinema together, this is how we spend time together.” [R6, 35; 5, 8 months, 8 months]

Social changes observed since the 20th century, chiefly in terms of the equal legal status of women and men, higher education levels in the female population and their ever-increasing presence in social and professional activity have all caused the traditional family model to be replaced by transitional and egalitarian relationships, as described by Arlie Hochschild. In transitional relationships, men identify themselves with professional work only, whereas women – professional duties apart – feel responsible for managing household chores and family obligations as well. In egalitarian relationships, on the other hand, men and women have an identical sense of responsibility for professional and family dominions; consequently, they make an effort to share family and household duties equally (Kwiatkowska, Nowakowska 2006).

From the economic viewpoint, the traditional family model has been displaced by a model based on the father as the male breadwinner, and the mother’s professional work as female part-time home career. The subsequent stage of evolution involves the dual earner family, wherein both the man

and woman are responsible for supporting the family financially, yet the woman remains the sole household and family carer. Within such a model, men continue representing traditional beliefs concerning the role division in the family; consequently, they engage in unpaid household chores only to an extent allowed by professional work. According to such a classification, the egalitarian model is represented by a dual career family, in which case household chores are equally shared by the man and the woman, the woman’s work recognized as a value in itself; such a model allows her to develop professionally in line with her own preferences (Kwiatkowska, Nowakowska 2006). As proven by the afore-quoted statements, while the respondents engage in performing household and family obligations with an increasing intensity, in most cases, they are part of dual earner families; dual career families are less frequent.

Our analysis shows that the respondent fathers did have a tendency to emphasize changes observed in family models and their own roles themselves, as proven by the following statements:

“Men must also replace women, who are becoming increasingly active professionally; men taking over their responsibilities, also those associated with raising children.” [R1, 46; 10, 4]

“I think that expectations have also been on the rise, because men are kind of doing much more at home, in their own family units, as it were. And I think that the society is changing, and men are kind of doing increasingly more things usually managed by women.” [R18, 41; 11, 5]

“Today, the father’s role is probably much greater than... Than some time ago. I mean, some time ago, really many years ago, alright? I don’t know, fifty years ago, when the father was basically obliged to support his

family and the mother raised the children. Today, things are different, and I think fathers are expected to do more – what I mean is that the father has to really spend time with the child and help develop his or her interests, show the child the world, become an authority...” [R19, 51; 14]

“Some time ago, the father was just the guy bringing money home, and the woman took care, the mother took care of the home; today, they kind of share such responsibilities, both parents work, both parents take care of their children and their home, so I think that this is about sharing all obligations, this is equality.” [R21, 43; 15, 9, 5]

“Today, the father-husband has to be involved, should be involved in all daily work, even connected with cooking or collecting children from school, taking them to school and doing their homework with them, participating in the child’s extracurricular classes, truly engaging in every aspect of a family’s daily life.” [R27, 36; 8]

“It seems that by comparison to other models, participation from the early days of childhood and sharing child care is required. Not as it used to be – that the father took full control when the child turned seven. Today, this begins at birth, or even earlier – care and concern are expected during foetal life, talking to the child, and also the father is expected, at least this is how I see it in my social environment, not to showcase these old models – that the man is to make money and support his family – but rather to support the politically correct balance of making money and managing the household. Before, things were simple, the guy was to bring money home, and the rest... Kind of worked. The father is required to be there – there, that’s the most important thing! TO BE THERE, to be present.” [R29, 37; 9, 6, 3 months]

Having children brings a major life change in the case of women as well as men, whose involvement in household chores and raising children is becoming ever more frequent. On the one hand, professional work

and making money continue to be seen as a father’s fundamental obligations. On the other, a contemporary man should be active and engaged in professional responsibilities as well as in family life. Yet the day has not stretched beyond twenty-four hours. Consequently, the work-family conflict has become a phenomenon increasingly often diagnosed in the case of women as well as men, such a conflict most frequently appearing during the period of delivering family responsibilities. Researchers regularly reference the family-work roles conflict defined as “a form of conflicting roles, wherein requirements difficult to reconcile tie in with family and professional roles, performance in one of the areas an obstacle to performing in the other” (Lachowska 2013).

According to Bożena Balcerzak-Paradowska, working parents are the most recurrent sufferers of a time-related conflict, a pressure conflict and a preferred values conflict. A time-related conflict is born of inflexible work time, resulting in family life’s subordinacy to professional life. As proven by the abovementioned data, men often work over 40 hours a week. Work encroaches on family life, gradually reducing the amount of time men can spend in physical and/or emotional contact with their immediate families. Such a work overload is acceptable as a cultural male imperative. A pressure conflict materializes when an employee allocates more of his or her own personal resources to professional work than he or she is comfortable with. A preferred values conflict, on the other hand, involves the withdrawal from family life for professional reasons, such withdrawal being temporary or permanent (Kwiatkowska, Nowakowska 2006). Work overload often results in a loss of touch with one’s im-

mediate family – the wife and children. As proven by the previously described analysis, while most of the respondent fathers believed that men are the ones primarily responsible for securing their families' livelihoods, they are increasingly often involved in household chores and raising children. Furthermore, women work professionally in most families. Accordingly, the fact that the respondents themselves pointed to a work-family conflict comes as no surprise:

"Whereas the man has to have a lot of time to handle stuff so that he can have time for other things apart from work – children, mostly, but also shopping, matters concerning the home itself, cleaning up a little, changing a light bulb – he can't just be demanding toward his wife or children." [R7, 41; 12, 10]

"The man actually has to do everything the mother does; plus, he has to earn money, so, as someone put it very nicely, once a child is born, he has to earn twice as much and work twice as little." [R12, 46; 6, 3]

"Spending as much time as you'd like to be probably the most difficult thing of all. Because emotional involvement – this you can kind of learn – but time, to spend as much as you would like, that's the hardest." [R3, 36; 5.5; 3.5]

"Well... But it doesn't always work, well... That I could actually spend time with them [wife and daughter] and take care of them in this kind of constructive way. I would like that myself, but I don't always manage; it usually doesn't work." [R8, 41; 13, 12].

"There were moments like these in my work, that apart from actually working I used to spend my evenings preparing for training courses or something, so when it comes to a balance between my time at work or spent working versus my time spent with the family, well, the latter was definitely at a disadvantage." [R26, 40; 13, 10, 11 months]

Reference sources speak of the work-family conflict defined as complications in performing in the family role for professional reasons, and the family-work conflict as the difficulty to perform in one's professional role for family and domestic reasons. These two conflict types are recognized as two separate constructs with different reasons and consequences (Greenhaus, Powell 2003). In view of the above, fathers were also asked whether they had neglected their household duties to take care of their work matters or the other way around. Ten men declared negligence of household duties, eight – negligence of home and professional duties alike, four – negligence of professional duties; seven men declared being not negligent of neither home nor work obligations.

Iwona Chmura-Rutkowska and Joanna Ostrouch argue that professional, success-related social pressures frequently result in men's lesser involvement in family matters (Chmura-Rutkowska, Ostrouch 2007). As proven by our study, the negligence of home duties most frequently arose from the need to work on weekends or evenings, albeit not exclusively:

"Sometimes, I had to work on the weekend when we had a work bottleneck at the office." [R17, 27; 3]

"The flat would not be cleaned for two weeks, for example, because I had to work on the weekend and get my work affairs straightened out, as this was more important for financial reasons and because I had to satisfy my employer's expectations." [R2, 30; 2.5; 1]

"Especially in the beginning, when all that [the company] had to be swung. I used to sit at the computer until one or three at night, and then at the office until four or five p.m., then back home and back to the computer after dinner – it took about two years of such murderous work. It may definitely be

said that over these two years I was practically out of it and I noticed something was off. Nowadays, I try to leave work back at the company. But it doesn't really work like that in my case, as I am a very emotional person." [R16, 39; 11,10]

"It generally happened that work took up so much time that I had none left to spend at home. That wasn't really often. These were difficult times, it simply turned out that way that in order to keep your job or deliver everything your superiors required you had to spend so much time doing it that work simply took longer than eight hours a day, and it would just go on like that for much longer than a month or two." [R14, 40; 14]

The afore-quoted statements confirm the study results proving that men suffer from the work-family conflict more frequently (Iskra-Golec, Osikowska, Siemiginowska, Przetacznik 2014). These statements regrettably also suggest that contemporarily, "work impinges on private life, its time-span continuously shortened. Consequently, employees utterly focused on professional duties are formed, work their autotelic value ever more often. Cult of work is on the rise, as being busy is one of the ultimate values, a status and prestige determinant as well as proof of employee sacrifice to their employing organisation" (Pluta 2014).

Yet fathers were very much aware that the negligence of domestic and parental duties for professional reasons had not always been necessary:

"Work took up a significant share of my time... And now, from a certain perspective, I can definitely declare that I had exaggerated with my professional involvement – I could have actually done less and it would have been alright as well." [R6, 35; 5, 8 months, 8 months]

Some fathers worked at night if needed to avoid the negligence of either professional or parental duties:

"Usually, if I have some kind of assignment I have to finish at home, on the computer, for example, I finish it when the child is asleep. If I have to work on the computer, I simply do it at night so that it doesn't interfere with household responsibilities." [R4, 34; 3]

One respondent emphasized that he is capable of neglecting household duties only if the reward is significant:

"I can do it both ways, but the negligence of home responsibilities would have to entail a major professional profit. You have to get something in exchange; there's no such thing as a free lunch, but this works one way only – I wouldn't neglect the children, for example." [R3, 36; 5,5; 3,5]

Another respondent would not admit to consciously neglecting home responsibilities, while admitting that such situations did occur:

"It's not that I neglected them. This was a conscious period of intense work, I wouldn't say I neglected my children. Children are my priority, and it never happened that I simply couldn't have cared less. I might have forgotten, but that was caused by other things. But I never consciously placed my work before my children's interest." [R1, 46; 10, 4]

In analyzing the matter of neglecting professional duties, it ought to be emphasized that the most common reasons involved were necessary child care:

"If the negligence of professional duties includes leaving work earlier because I had to take care of the child, then yes – it did happen." [R4; 34; 3]

"When my son was sick, and we had to seek help, then yes, I took time off. I simply wasn't there, and others had to fill in for me." [R17, 27; 3]

Nonetheless, professional boredom was a factor as well:

"Definitely true. This was also a great excuse not to get fully involved in what is terribly

boring, dreadfully dreary and not always entirely satisfactory. And children are always a satisfaction. Was it like this often? Well, it never became pathological.” [R1, 46; 10, 4]

It turns out that fathers believe their wives would want them to neglect professional responsibilities to focus on home:

“That is my wife’s unspoken dream, but not really feasible... Regrettably, the man has to be responsible, because if he’s kicked out...” [R12, 46; 6, 3]

Men not neglecting any duties emphasized that this tied in with a skillful separation of professional and personal or family life. When at work, they were fully involved in professional obligations; once the work day was over, they would put all their energy into household chores and duties:

“The thing is, when I leave at four p.m., I close everything and just don’t give a hoot, nobody calls me and that’s that. And the same thing at home – everyone knows I’m out from eight until four, but then I’m back and I can do whatever needs doing – go shopping, change a light bulb etc.” [R7, 41; 12, 10].

“When I’m at work, I’m at work; I go back home after work and stop thinking about it, I put it away and focus on my children and family.” [R9, 32; 5; 1,5]

Proper time management skills proved important as well:

“I think that nowadays, you can truly manage to handle both work and family obligations.” [R15, 37; 4, 6].

Consequently, it ought to be emphasized that in semblance to mothers, fathers have a sense of a family-work conflict. Therefore, respondents were asked which form of employment of the fathers is most favorable to the family. While the related opinions varied greatly, self-employment (running one’s own business) was most frequently

mentioned as a form of employment allowing the greatest level of freedom and an easy way to manage professional and family life at the same time.

“Your own business provides [...] your family with the greatest comfort.” [R5, 37; 11, 4]

“Self-employment. Because then, a man can re-arrange his duties, with a full schedule on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, for example, leaving more free time on Thursday and Friday, to meet all these family expectations.” [R2, 30; 2,5; 1]

“Theoretically, a form of self-employment would be convenient, because then you could adjust your working hours, your involvement according to your family’s needs, not like when you work full-time. Working full-time is a form of slavery.” [R23, 36; 15, 12]

“It seems that this would be self-employment; you can then try and be flexible in dividing your time between the firm you run and family life.” [R22, 27; 3, 6]

“Running your own company, I think: your business hours are not regulated by any employer, you are responsible for your own business and make decisions concerning your work time all by yourself.” [R15, 37; 4, 6]

All statements quoted pointed to flexible business hours as a major factor, making self-employment an attractive format. One father emphasized that being a freelancer – which actually also requires opening a business and self-employment – offers similar benefits:

“I’m working now. I left a corporation after nineteen years, and I’m working as a taxi driver [...], such a flexible schedule is much more family-friendly. [...] With young children, and if you want to have an impact on raising them, then maybe with one child, one parent can be working full-time, and the other can be self-employed or something; I think this is the best option.” [R21, 43; 15, 9, 5].

Flexible working hours apart, respondents listed other solutions, such as an assignment-based job or home office work. It goes without saying that both options are also open to regular employment contract staff, pursuant to provisions of Polish labour law.

“Forms allowing flexible working hours are most advantageous. Regrettably, the thing with children is that you never know when the father may be needed, so if the father has an option of working from home, of working in an unregulated, non-standard time format, if his work can be assignment-based, his chances of managing work and life are much better.” [R26, 40; 13, 10, 11 months]

“I worked at a home office for six years, and that was the most convenient form of employment, allowing me to manage my time in any way that I wanted and spend all available time with the children, which obviously meant I had to make up for that time later. A home office or similar solutions are best if you want to focus on your family and children.” [R1, 46; 10, 4]

Some fathers emphasized that full-time employment is more advantageous than being self-employed. They believe that being self-employed means you are at work all the time, and pointed to obstacles in separating work from family life:

“With this business of mine, it’s kind of difficult to say – it does happen that I would work twelve or twenty-four hours a day, for example, because even if I am not at work, I keep thinking about it, deliberating and speculating – I walk around with my head in the clouds, kind of out of family life, so... When you’re a regular employee, then it’s none of your business, you close the door behind you at four or five and that’s it, no more thinking, you close the door and nothing else matters – so I actually think that regular employment gives you the peace and space to be in and with your family.” [R16, 39; 11,10]

“Regular employment offers a lot of rights and privileges: you can’t work on Sundays, you have to have thirty-five hours off, all these things; if you’re a father, if you spend time with your children, for example, rather than go out for a beer with your mates, they kind of make things easier... They offer some kind of rigid structure, for example. Of course, if you are strong-willed and can organize your own strict work structure, you can do it in cases of other forms of employment as well, somehow organizing life and business hours. You need a strong character, something I don’t have. I also think that regular employment is best for the family. Everything else is about variations generated for every other reason but the family.” [R29, 37; 9, 6, 3 weeks]

The surveyed men emphasized that regular employment offers a sense of stability, and that the employer covers all social benefits.

“Well, regular employment, most definitely. But you should also remember that there are certain consequences, that an employment contract is the most expensive form imaginable for the employer, which means you actually have to decide if you want to receive less money in exchange for benefits and a sense of security – for example, if I get sick, I will not lose my salary – or if you want as much money as possible at some kind of risk.” [R28, 36; 8, 5, 1]

“That depends. But I think that regular employment, full-time, as this offers stability and financial security to the family.” [R4, 34; 3]

Yet one respondent emphasized that an interminable employment contract is a vital component, as it offers a sense of security and certain protection against being made redundant overnight in view of the notice period:

“An interminable employment contract. [...] Because it warrants considerable stability and a sense of security. After several years,

you don't all of a sudden lose your job, because there are notice periods and severance packages." [R13, 41; 12]

Some fathers accentuated that this is an individual matter dependent on various factors, such as one's personality or time management skills:

"Hmm... that's a tough question. Because it depends on... A little on the personality... Of the father, and if he feels okay with his own company, so to say, so – not being an employee, and... He does what he should be doing in terms of supporting his family, then it doesn't really matter whether he is a regular employee or not, right? Yet it's obvious, not only in the case of mothers and fathers, but anybody – if he himself thinks that it will be safer for him to be a regular employee, then... Then he has to become a regular employee, and he will never prove himself in another role. On the other hand, there are people out there who can't even begin imagining themselves as employees, because they are hugely inventive, they have a lot of ideas, abilities, and they make much more money, so to speak, running their own businesses, than they would never make as employees. This is why I think it absolutely up to the individual." [R19, 51; 14].

"It would be great to be employed like this, it would be great in general to know that everyone goes to work for eight hours and works eight hours, then comes home and takes care of home. With regard to the form of employment, there is no doubt that a lot of people are used to it, I myself am used to that a regular employment contract gives stability. Now if... I also know that even if you have a short-term job or an assignment contract, you can have a sense of stability as well if you are good at what you do and if you don't have to worry if you will have work or not. And, I also know, I could give examples of my mates – they run their own businesses, it gives them... They are also kind of certain about their future, about their tomorrow, and they think their employment is stable. And such a form of employment, self-employment,

or running their own businesses, simply gives them great freedom in planning their work, so they have more time for their families and their homes." [R14, 40; 14]

"I think this is unconnected... A regular employment contract or one's own business, it all depends on the individual situation... The industry, profession, family – you cannot generalize." [R8, 41; 13, 12]

"There is no such form. I think there isn't such thing as a more favorable or less favorable form. It's all about how you arrange and manage your responsibilities." [R11, no data available; 7; 1.5 months]

Conclusions

The stereotype that shapes the male gender role through the prism of professional accomplishments makes men in Poland feel responsible for supporting their families. They usually perceive women's professional work as a supplement to the family budget. The vast majority of the surveyed respondents believed themselves to be the main breadwinners in their families. Yet notably, while fathers are increasingly often involved in family life and raising children, financial affairs remain a priority for them. When asked which requirements they find the easiest to satisfy, they declared that professional duties were in equal measure to the responsibilities of their families and households.

Most fathers realize that a traditional family model, with the woman focusing on the household and raising children and the man being responsible for securing the family's financial livelihood only, is one that can no longer be followed contemporarily, as women-mothers are increasingly frequent participants of the labour market.

Notably, men often emphasized that they were happy to see their wives work professionally, because it is something they want and because it fulfills them. Fathers believe

professional work to be a factor assuring their wives' personal development and self-realization. Such statements suggest that the families of the surveyed fathers are dual career families, wherein women's professional work is as important as that of men's and is a value in itself. Regrettably, an in-depth analysis of the statements concerning the requirements faced by contemporary men-fathers indicates that their families correspond to the model where the male is the breadwinner and the female pursues a part-time home-career, as men believe themselves to be the only ones responsible for supporting their families and see women's work as a way of supplementing the family budget. Some families seem to match the dual earner family model, given the partially traditional perception of gender roles in the family. As emphasized by Anna Matysiak, despite pointing to the dual career family model as the most appropriate one, Poles actually most often follow the dual earner family model, wherein women are responsible for professional responsibilities as well as household chores.

The need to deliver household and family responsibilities alike cause men to experience external as well as internal pressures, and these yields work-family conflicts that are most frequently associated with time shortages. In the course of the survey, men accentuated that their profes-

sional responsibilities prevent them from the level of involvement in their family lives they would prefer, and the respondents admitted to being negligent of their family duties – yet some also admitted to neglecting their professional responsibilities, most frequently because of the need to care of sick children. There were also fathers who reportedly did not neglect any duties, claiming that time management skills are of paramount importance, alongside the ability to separate work from family life.

Respondents believe that self-employment (running one's own business) is the employment form most favorable for family life. Flexible business hours were the ultimate deciding component for that. Yet it should be pointed out that fathers considered the potential options of having a home office or an assignment-based job as being equally important. Nonetheless, quite a few responses suggested that the so-called regular employment offers men a sense of stability and security.

Notably, the majority of surveyed men experience a sense of a work-family conflict. The phenomenon is due to the contemporaneously observed changes in the dominant family model and the ever-increasing burden of household responsibilities entrusted to men. Consequently, any contemporary scientific research in the field has to recognize women-mothers, as well as men-fathers, as parts of the same issue.

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MORE OF A FATHER, OR MORE OF AN EMPLOYEE? THE CONDITIONS OF WORKING MEN RAISING CHILDREN IN POLAND

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S u m m a r y

A qualitative research, conducted as a pilot study titled *The Contemporary Father – at the Crossroads of Expectations and Reality*, was conducted in Warsaw in 2017. The data analysis showed that fathers with full families (husband, wife and children) do express their willingness to participate in their family lives, and especially to spend time with their children. On the other hand, most of the respondents pointed out that their main responsibility is to provide the financial security of their families, so being

active at the employment market is very important for them. Meanwhile, most of the fathers expressed satisfaction from having wives/partners that are also actively employed. Fathers face difficulties in achieving a work-life balance in their lives, as the dual model of having both a career and a family seems to be the most appropriate for them. The findings show that the respondents face the constant dilemma of having to choose where to devote their time – to the family or the workplace.

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