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Jelena Tanasijević  
University of Belgrade, Faculty of Political Sciences<sup>1</sup>

# Challenges of Modern Age in the Field of Work-family Reconciliation Policies in Serbia

## Abstract

The challenges faced by modern countries have influenced the change of priorities in social policies and, in this context, also in family-related policies. As we know, labor market opportunities and possibilities for working parents are not solely the reflection of a country's economic situation. Cultural aspects of a country and working parents' individual characteristics also have an impact on their position in the labor market. Support provided by the state to working parents is another determining factor in their position and viability on the labor market. Because of that, institutional arrangements in this area are very important and they present an intervention field in most European countries, including Serbia. Taking that into account, a frequent topic of public debate is the question what models should be put in place in order to assist parents to enter and remain in the labor market there continuing to fulfil their family responsibilities. The key question of this assignment is to analyze the status of working parents and challenges they face in their efforts to strike a balance between family commitments and work obligations.

**Keywords:** work-family reconciliation policy, gender equality, position of women in the labor market

## Introduction

Work – family reconciliation is a concept that has been the theme of discussion in the frame of different empirical and theoretical studies during the last two decades. Policies which are directed at regulating

<sup>1</sup> Social Work Practice Teacher  
[jelena.tanasijevic@fpn.bg.ac.rs](mailto:jelena.tanasijevic@fpn.bg.ac.rs)

labor market relations in general can be divided into policies aimed at encouraging employment of parents and trying to regulate relations in the labor market and those providing financial assistance to families and payments for certain services (ILO 2010:87; Eydal, Rostgaard 2011:176). Viewed in this manner, as depending on the components and level of development of the system itself, rather than the country's economy, political and social system, these policies can be deemed as stimulating, neutral, or discouraging for the position of women, if we take into account paid and unpaid work (Addati 2015:70).

The most important forms of support in Serbia that can be the focal points of examination include tax policies, child allowances, fees for children and absence from work (Law on Financial Support to Families with Children, Art. 5 and 9; Labour Law, Art. 94). Achieving this form of support for parents, especially for mothers, is more easily associated with their commitments and obligations both at work and at home. Still, at the same time it should aim at increasing their professional engagement, too (Dhembo 2007:166).

The aim of this assignment is to research the challenges and difficulties that working parents in Serbia encounter in their lives in view of achieving a more successful balance between their responsibilities at home and at work. Especially if we acknowledge the demands and trends of the modern labor market and fewer possibilities to completely meet the needs of families with professional engagement.

## **Theoretical framework-Examples of policies and practices of gender equality in the European Union**

Paid work and care work are fundamental to the lives of family members and it becomes increasingly difficult and onerous to manage a successful job alongside responsibility for dependants in the context of rapid and dramatic family and labor change (Lewis 2009:25). The problems of balancing responsibilities are not the same for women and men (Lewis 2009:48), because mothers have increased their participation in the labor market greatly, but fathers haven't increased their participation in unpaid household work. Public interest in the work and family balance policies has expanded in recent years. From the policymaker's perspective, it is an issue to what extent the state's intervention is justified in helping family members to make balance in those two fields. Also, work

and family policies are often seen as a solution to a range of policy problems as well as: unemployment, fertility rates, tackling child poverty, etc. That means that work and family policies together with gender equality have been an explicit goal to all EU countries (Lewis 2009: 83).

Despite the fact that considerable attention of European countries has been dedicated to the policy of adjustments between family and professional obligations, there is no homogenous trend of services development in this field. The factors which largely affect the participation of women in the official labor market are the number of children in the family, family economic status and educational level of parents (OECD 2011:36). The policy aimed at family is also an important factor in the decision-making process if and to what extent women will be engaged in work (OECD 2008:3). However, according to OECD much better results in this field could be accomplished if there was a possibility of creating working arrangements where women could be engaged in part-time work, (OECD 2008:38). Although the importance of shared parental absence is recognized, both in terms of the advancement and development of a child and from the standpoint of gender equality, labor market demands and duties in the household are not supported by all national policies towards this idea (Maskalan 2016:392). Regardless of the direction of interventions and guidelines, states are faced with challenges of how to find a system that provides alignment of the needs of parents and children which is equally efficient from the economic, demographic and social aspects (European Commission 2010: 12; OECD 2011:58).

The European Commission recognizes difficulties that exist in this area. The EU Commission has launched a public debate on the topic of creating a successful balance between the demands of both sides, as well as the reduction of barriers that exist in the process of greater involvement of women in the formal labor market. This contributes to an increase in employment, which also represents one of the goals of the Strategy "Europe 2020" (Kronja 2015:36). Strengthening gender equality and providing equalization during the distribution of work and responsibilities between women and men are the principles underlying the debate (Perišić 2010:129).

The European Union increasingly advocates the need for additional investments in family-related policies. However, innovation is reflected in the concept of social investment. "How does the concept of social investment imply that with the activating dimension one must respect the

equality dimension and guarantee certain social security, recent trends show that due to growing economic pressures, the activating component is gaining importance. Thus, the policy measures for the harmonization of family responsibilities and paid work are, as a rule, advocated and encouraged in relation to economic objectives of employment and competitiveness growth. This is primarily reflected in the very character of mechanisms developed by the European Union in this area, which are fundamentally aimed at maintaining the link between parents and the labor market, while increasingly ignoring issues of gender equality and the well-being of the family” (Dobrotić 2015: 354).

Studies conducted in Serbia at the end of XX and the beginning of XXI century indicate that the status of women at the time did not substantially change and that the concept of reconciliation of family and professional commitments was mainly based on the double burden for a woman (Blagojević Hjuson 2014: 387; Milić 2006: 63; Blagojević 1997:50).

Since the beginning of XXI century and in the years that followed, the reaffirmation of women’s position, particularly in the sphere of politics and culture, has gradually occurred. However, it cannot be concluded that the status of women has been improved in a larger perspective (RZS 2014:36). This especially if one bears in mind the data on rising unemployment rates. According to the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, it is evidential that women make the majority among the unemployed population, leading us to the conclusion that women are forced to return to more traditional roles and make a choice between family and employment (RZS 2007:35). In this context, demographic studies have shown that in a situation of general acceptance of low reproductive rates, the effect of education as a principal factor in reproductive behaviour is declining (Šobot 2012:102).

In terms of the double burden, data for Serbia show that in 2013, 85% of women and 77% of men felt some form of conflict between private and work commitments. If we analyze the data for the European Union covering the same period, where 59% of women and 54% of men said they felt this type of burden (Šobot 2012:35), it can be concluded that in our country not only a higher percentage of men and women experience heavier burden, but also that the disparity by sex is far more prominent. In addition, data from the same source indicates that 57% of unemployed women would accept paid work if they had the option of flexible working hours (Šobot 2012:37). This data can be linked to

the possibilities provided for by the Labour Law, granting employee and employer the right to agree on working a portion of hours from home or by working on a part-time basis (Perišić, Vidojević 2015:181).

## **Research – methodology and goals**

The data for this study have been collected by a questionnaire consisting of 33 questions. The sample was drawn according to the principle of random selection. It consisted of 203 respondents living on the territory of the City of Belgrade. The survey was conducted between January and April 2015. Of the total respondents, 158 were part of the general population, while 45 were involved in foster care.

Female respondents engaged in foster care were singled out as a separate subgroup, given the specificity and challenges of caring for the children without parental care which consequently complicates the family organization and requires increased involvement of foster parents (Tanasijević 2016:151).

The data were analysed by a set of parametric and non-parametric statistical techniques. Frequency of analysis was performed most often and it shows the frequencies and percentages of female respondents who had opted for different answers. Differences in the frequency of different categories of responses were tested using Chi-square test. The connection between category variables was tested by calculating Cramer's V coefficient, while the connection between continuous variables was tested by calculating Pearson correlation coefficient.

Oral interviews were also conducted with female respondents, during which they were asked questions of open and closed type.

## **Results**

In the general population group, the largest number of female respondents belonged to the age group between 36 and 40. The subsample of foster mothers consisted of slightly older respondents (Table 1).

Table 1. – The age structure

Age	Female respondents – general population (%)	Female respondents – foster care mothers (%)
20-25	3,2	0
26-30	4,4	4,4
31-35	24,7	11,1
36-40	37,3	8,9
41-45	16,5	15,6
46-50	8,9	40
Over 50	5,1	20

The majority of respondents from both subsamples were married at the time of the test. The following table presents the data on the marital status of the respondents (Table 2).

Table 2. – Marital status

Status	Female respondents – general population (%)	Female respondents – foster care mothers (%)
Married	82,9	68,9
Consensual union	6,3	11,1
Divorced	6,3	8,9
Separated	3,2%	6,7
Unmarried	1,3	4,4

The majority of respondents - members of the general population had high school education, but in the subsample of foster mothers women with lower levels of educational qualifications dominated (Table 3).

Table 3. – Educational background

Education	Female respondents – general population (%)	Female respondents – foster care mothers (%)
PhD	1,3	0
Master's degree or specialization	9,5	4,4
High school	62	13,3
Secondary school (4. degree of education)	19	22,2
Secondary school (3. degree of education)	5,1	28,9
Primary school	2,5	31,1

In the period when they took part in the survey, the majority of respondents from both subsamples were employed. The following table presents the data on the employment status of our respondents (Table 4).

Table 4. – Employment\*

Status	Female respondents – general population (%)	Female respondents – foster care mothers (%)
<b>Employed</b>	88,6	80
<b>Unemployed</b>	3,2	8,9
<b>Maternity leave</b>	4,4	2,2

\* A total of 6 respondents in this subsample did not choose any of these three categories. Those were the respondents working from home, self-employed, working under service contract or occasionally, and unregistered. One of the respondents in this group reported that she was fired after maternity leave. Four of the respondents in the foster mothers subsample chose to answer “Other” (one takes care of a sick child; two are working occasionally and unregistered).

The majority of employed respondents were employed for an indefinite period of time. In the subsample of respondents – members of the general population, 118 of them or 76.6% of the subsample were employed for an indefinite period, 24 or 15.6% of the subsample were employed for a limited period, while 11 respondents or 7.1% of the subsample worked unregistered.

The data are somewhat different in the subsample of foster mothers. Although the largest number of respondents in this subsample was also employed for an indefinite period, the percentage is lower than in the general population subsample. By the length of working experience, the structure of the sample generally follows the age structure of the sample. Among the general population participants, the most numerous were respondents who worked between 9 and 12 years (36 or 22.9% of the subsample of the general population members), respondents who worked between 12 and 15 years (30 of them or 19.1% of the subsample). In the foster mothers subsample, the most numerous were the respondents who worked more than 15 years (22 of them or 48.9% of the subsample of foster mothers).

In the group of female respondents – members of the general population, the largest number performed professional activities (89 of them or 58.6% of the subsample of the general population members). Following are respondents who performed administrative tasks (22 of them or 14.5% of the subsample), 10 respondents performed technical

duties (6.6% of the subsamples), 4 respondents performed managerial jobs (2.6% of the subsample), while 3 of them were directors (2% of the subsamples) or owners of private companies (2% of the subsamples). The remaining respondents, 21 of them, mostly worked in education or as merchants. In the group of foster mothers, 14 of them performed technical tasks (31.1% of the subsample of foster mothers), one performed administrative tasks (2.2% of the subsample), one performed managerial jobs (2.2% of the subsamples), one was director (2.2% of the subsample), and also one respondent owned a private company (2.2% of the subsample). The remaining 18 foster mothers mainly worked as maids, hygienists or merchants.

In the general population group, the most respondents worked in the public sector. Even 105 respondents or 67.7% of the subsample worked in the public sector, half as many worked in the private sector (45 respondents, or 29% of the subsamples), while the remaining 5 respondents worked in both, as well as in the NGO sector (3.2% of the subsample).

Respondents reported the proportion of their participation in the household budget (Table 5) of their families with their personal income, expressed as a percentage. Results show a significantly higher number of respondents in both subsamples whose incomes make up less than 50% of the total household budget. In the general population subsample, a total of 98 respondents, or 62% of the subsample contribute less than 50% of the total value of the household budget. Far fewer respondents, 58 of them or 37% of the subsample contribute with more than 50% of the total household budget. In the context of the research for the needs of the analysis, statistically significant positive correlation of very low intensity between the age of the respondents and participation in the household budget has been determined. The elder respondents, the greater is the participation in the total household budget ( $r=.144$ ,  $p=.029$ ). There is an even stronger link between the length of years of service and participation in the household budget, so women who work longer years contribute more to the family budget ( $r=.262$ ,  $p<.001$ ).

The largest number of respondents from both groups had two children. In the general population group, 77 respondents had two children (49% of the subsample), 61 respondents had one child (38.9% of the subsample), while the remaining 19 respondents had three children (12.1% of the subsample). In the subsample of foster mothers, 17 respondents had two children (38.6% of the subsample), while 5 foster mothers had more than three children (11.1% of the subsample).



Table 5. – Participation in the household budget

Percentage of participation in budget	Female respondents – general population (number)	Female respondents – foster care mothers (number)
<b>91-100% of budget</b>	16	6
<b>81-90 of budget</b>	7	5
<b>71-80 of budget</b>	6	2
<b>61-70 of budget</b>	15	1
<b>51-60 of budget</b>	14	3
<b>41-50 of budget</b>	30	8
<b>31-40 of budget</b>	25	7
<b>21-30 of budget</b>	25	6
<b>10-20 of budget</b>	13	7
<b>Less than 10% of budget</b>	5	0

In both groups of female respondents, the largest number had a child under the age of 15 and a majority had a child of preschool age. Preschool children of respondents from both subsamples mostly attended preschool institutions. In the general population subsample of members, the children of 67 respondents attended preschool institutions (45.9% of the general population subsample), while children of 16 respondents (11% of the subsample) did not attend preschool.

In the foster mothers subsample, the children of 14 foster mothers attended preschool institutions (33.3% of the foster mothers subsample), while children of 2 foster mothers did not attend preschool institutions (4.8% of the subsample).

The respondents with preschool children were asked if they took their children to and from preschool institutions. It turned out that the majority of respondents shared this responsibility with other family members (mostly grandmothers, grandfathers and husband). In the general population subsample, among the respondents with children of preschool age, the majority of respondents who took their children to and from kindergarten did not do so every day (30 respondents, or 21.1% of the general population subsample). They are followed by respondents who took their child to and from kindergarten every day (24 respondents or 16.9% of the subsample), while a slightly lower percentage of respondents did not take their children to and from the kindergarten (17 respondents or 12% of the subsample). In the foster mothers group, 5 respondents took their children to and from the kindergarten but not every day (11.9% of the subsample).

The largest numbers of respondents who had children of elementary school age did not use the services of extended stay. Most respondents who had children of elementary school age took them to and from school or they had help of other family members (primarily spouse and grandparents).

Respondents from both groups reported that they mostly spent more than 3 hours a day in performing household duties including child care. These respondents mostly reported they spent about 5-6 hours doing these jobs, while some respondents spent even 10 hours a day doing household errands.

In the general population group of respondents, only 10 respondents spent one to two hours doing housework and engaging in child care (6.5% of the subsample of the general population members), 55 respondents spent between 2 and 3 hours a day on these tasks (35.9% of the subsample), while the remaining respondents spent over 3 hours and on the average between 5 and 6 hours a day (57.5% of the subsample) (Table 4).

In the foster mothers group, 4 respondents spent between 1 and 2 hours in housework and child care (9.1% of the subsample of foster mothers), 19 of them spent between 2 and 3 hours a day on these tasks (43.2% of the subsample), while 21 spent more than 3 hours a day doing housework and participating in child care (47.7% of the subsample) (Table 6).

Table 6. - Number of hours that respondents spend in performing housework, including child care

Number of hours	Female respondents – general population (%)	Female respondents – foster care mothers (%)
1-2	6,5	9,1
2-3	35,9	43,2
More than 3	57,5	47,7

A slightly higher number of respondents believed that they shouldn't spend more time in performing household duties, including child care. Eighty one respondents in the general population group (52.6% of the general population subsample) stated so, while 73 believed they should spend more time in these activities (47.4% of the subsample). This difference is not statistically significant ( $\chi^2(1)=0.42$ ,  $p=.519$ ).

In the foster mothers group, this difference is more prominent and statistically significant ( $\chi^2(1)=4.45$ ,  $p=.030$ ). A total of 29 foster mothers

believed they shouldn't spend more time doing housework and child care (65.9% of the subsample of foster mothers), while 15 foster mothers believed that they should spend more time in performing these tasks (34.1% of the subsample).

Most respondents who participated in the research worked eight hours a day. In the general population group of respondents, 71 respondents worked eight hours a day (46.4% of the subsample of the general population members), 53 respondents worked less than eight hours a day (34.6% of the sample), and 28 respondents worked more than eight hours a day (18.3% of the subsample).

In the foster mothers subsample, 26 respondents worked eight hours a day (63.4% of the subsample of foster mothers), 9 respondents worked less than eight hours a day (22% of the subsample), and 6 respondents worked more than eight hours a day (14.6% of the subsample).

Table 7. - Length of working time

	<b>Female respondents - general population (%)</b>	<b>Female respondents - foster care mothers (%)</b>
<b>8 hours daily</b>	46,4	63,4
<b>More than 8 hours daily</b>	18,3	14,6
<b>Less than 8 hours daily</b>	34,6	22

All respondents reported an experience of overtime. In the group of respondents – members of the general population, 19 respondents worked overtime on a daily basis (15.3% of the general population subsample), 25 respondents stayed longer at work 2-3 times a week (20.2% of the subsample), 18 respondents did so two to three times in two weeks (14.5% of the subsample), while the largest number of respondents, 62 of them (50% of the subsample), worked overtime only two to three times per month. In the group of foster mothers, only 2 respondents worked overtime on a daily basis (8.3% of the subsample of foster mothers), 4 worked overtime several times a week (16.7% of the subsample), one of the respondents reported working longer hours several times in a period of two weeks (4.2% of the subsample), and as in the previous group, the largest number of foster mother respondents, 17 of them, rarely worked overtime, just a few times per month (70.8% of the subsample).

Both groups of respondents were asked if they were married and what were their plans related to parenting at their job interviews. Within

the general population subsample, 52 respondents had this experience (33.5% of the general population subsample), while 103 respondents haven't been faced with this question (66.5% of the subsample). Thus statistically, a significantly larger part of the sample of respondents from the general population haven't been asked for private plans at their job interviews ( $\chi^2(1)=16.78$ ,  $p<.001$ ). In the sample of foster mothers, the results are somewhat different. There is no statistically significant difference in the number of respondents who have been asked this question, and those who haven't ( $\chi^2(1)=0.20$ ,  $p=.655$ ): 21 foster mothers have faced these questions at a job interview (46.7% of the subsample of foster mothers), while 24 of them haven't (53.3% of the subsample).

In both groups there were respondents who knew someone whose employment contract was terminated shortly after returning from maternity leave / absence from work for child care. In the general population group, these women are in the majority ( $\chi^2(1)=4.33$ ,  $p=.037$ ). As many as 91 respondents from this group knew someone whose employment contract was terminated shortly after returning from maternity leave / absence from work for child care (58.3% of the general population subsample), while 65 respondents did not know such a person (41.7% of the subsample). In the sample of foster mothers, there was no statistically significant difference in the number of respondents who knew or did not know such a person ( $\chi^2(1)=2.69$ ,  $p=.101$ ): 17 respondents knew someone whose employment contract was terminated shortly after returning from maternity leave/absence from work for child care (37.8% of the subsample of foster mothers), while 28 foster mothers did not know a single person with such experience (62.2% of the subsample).

In the general population group, respondents who came back to the same position in which they had worked before maternity leave/absence from work for child care are more numerous ( $\chi^2(1)=27.68$ ,  $p<.001$ ). There are 106 of them (71.6% of the general population subsample), while 42 of them did not return to the same position after this type of absence (28.4% of the subsample). In the subsample of foster mothers, there is no statistically significant difference in the number of foster mothers who returned to the position in which they worked before their leave and those who didn't ( $\chi^2(1)=3.27$ ,  $p=.071$ ): 24 foster mothers returned to the same position (64.9% of the subsample of foster mothers), while 14 of them didn't (35.1% of the subsample).

The majority of respondents in both groups did not experience any problems at work due to the use of sick leave or due to the illness of the

child. Within the subsample of the general population, 122 respondents did not experience such problems (84.7% members of the general population), while 22 of them did (15.3% of the subsample;  $\chi^2(1)=69.44$ ,  $p<.001$ ). In the group of foster mothers, 35 women did not experience such problems (79.1% of the subsample of foster mothers), while 8 did (18.6% of the subsample;  $\chi^2(1)= 42.19$ ,  $p<.001$ ).

The majority of respondents were not required to return to work before the expiration of the legal deadline which stipulates an absence from work for childcare. Among the general population participants, 127 women didn't have to return to work before the expiration of the legal deadline (85.8% of the subsample), while 21 did (14.2% of the subsample;  $\chi^2(1)= 75.92$ ,  $p<.001$ ). In the group of foster mothers, only one woman had to return to work before the expiration of this deadline (2.4% of the subsample), while the remaining 41 did not have to (95.2% of the subsample;  $\chi^2(1)= 72.43$ ,  $p<.001$ ).

Most of the respondents from both sample groups did not know any woman whose husband used the legally provided possibility of sick leave for child care. In the general population group, there were 102 such women (65.4% of the subsample of members of the general population), while 54 respondents known women whose husbands used sick leave for child care (34.6%;  $\chi^2(1)= 14.78$ ,  $p<.001$ ).

Both groups of respondents generally agreed that women and men have equal opportunities for professional development in their companies. Of all respondents belonging to the general population, 119 believed this to be the case (or 78.8% of the subsample), while 32 respondents from this group stated that opportunities for professional development in their firms aren't equal for men and women (21.2% of the subsample;  $\chi^2(1)= 50.17$ ,  $p<.001$ ). In the sample of foster mothers, there were more who believed that both sexes have equal opportunities for professional development, or 26 of them (66.7% of the subsample of foster mothers). The remaining 13 foster mothers didn't share their opinion (33.3% of the subsample;  $\chi^2(1)= 4.33$ ,  $p=.037$ ).

When it comes to promotion, women in the general population mostly reported that there was no gender discrimination in this regard within their companies, but the discrepancy was somewhat smaller here than when it comes to professional development ( $\chi^2(1)= 27.31$ ,  $p<.001$ ). The answers of foster mothers were similar to those relating to professional development. A larger number, or 28 of them (70% of the subsample), stated that the opportunities for promotion are equal for men

and women ( $\chi^2(1) = 6.40, p = .011$ ), while 12 foster mothers disagreed (30% of the subsample).

## Conclusion

During the research, the issues which required a more detailed analysis and may indicate a need to implement further research have been also identified. One of the limiting factors is the fact that the research has been conducted on the City of Belgrade territory. It further raises a question and assumption that the answers and perception of the situation would be different if other regions in Republic of Serbia were also included, especially because of its demographic and socio-economic characteristics.

Although the number of women who enroll and complete university studies is increasing (RZS 2015:106), and according to the data from 2009, the participation of women and men among those who have completed their PhD has equalized for the first time in our country (Blagojević 2012:86). This information is important also in the symbolic sense, as the rapid feminization of scientific titles may be partially linked to the deterioration of the overall situation of science, as is the case in other post-socialist countries and not only in improving the status of women. Women are actually more present in areas abandoned by men, i.e. in areas where status and payment are declining (Blagojević, 2012:88).

The survey shows that the percentage of women participating in the total household budget in most of the sample (62%) is below 50%. Therefore, the question is whether this is a personal choice to do with lower paid jobs or with the prioritizing of their family role and child caring commitments, and thus they do not have a lot of opportunities for promotion in the professional sphere. Another question arising is that of personal satisfaction with the achieved level of earnings.

The data on the participation of respondents in the family budget is significant due to the fact that most members of the general population covered by this study were aged between 36 and 40, when the capacities for promotion and achievement of professional ambitions are highly expressed. It would be also necessary to explore specific opportunities for advancement and vertical mobility in the public sector, given that most of the respondents were employed in this sector.

Correlation analysis was performed in order to examine if the level of education is associated with the percentage of women's participation

in the total household budget. There was a statistically significant positive correlation of low intensity between the level of education and participation of women in the total household budget on a subsample of the general population members. In the subsample of foster mothers such a correlation doesn't exist.

The question of the time period that respondents spent doing housework, or in activities with their children, indicates that the majority of respondents considered that they spent enough time with the family and that there was no need for a greater engagement in this field (52.6%). Responses of the majority of women indicate that they were engaged for more than three hours a day in family activities. This data can suggest fatigue and burden on women, especially if they are simultaneously overburdened with responsibilities both at home and at work. All respondents experienced working overtime, with 15.3% who work overtime every day, while 20.2% worked overtime three times a week. This information may also account for the attitude of the majority of respondents who believed they did not have to spend more time on family responsibilities. In addition, the majority of respondents confirmed that they didn't know any women whose husbands benefited from the possibility of sick leave for child care, which again supports the fact that women are more involved in child care.

When comparing the obtained data relating to the number of hours that women spent on housework and child care, it can be concluded that the results correspond to the results of other statistics which also show that women spent more hours on these activities. Out of the total number of respondents from the general population, only 6.5% of the subsample spent one to two hours on these activities, 35.9% of the subsample spent between two and three hours a day on housework and childcare, while 57.5% of the subsamples spent between five and six hours a day. In the group of foster mothers, 47.7% of the subsample spends more than three hours a day in these activities every day. Data of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia from 2014 indicates that women spent more than seven hours in total work, while men spent fewer hours. On weekends, women are on the average more involved in unpaid work than the men are engaged in total work. The more educated women are the more time they spend on paid work. According to the same source, regardless of their level of education, women spent more than four hours on unpaid work. Women who have higher and high educational level spend fewer hours. When it comes to leisure activities,

women spent less than five and a half hours, while men spent six and a half hours (RZS 2014:81).

In the context of this study, no significant relationship was determined between the type of sectors in which respondents worked and their opportunities for promotion. However, the data available for Serbia suggests that women are twice less often self-employed than men, which further indicates their disadvantage on the labor market, especially bearing in mind that women's entrepreneurship is conditioned by men's support, both private and public (Kolin 2009:20). On the other hand, differences by gender are significantly reduced among the youngest respondents, reflecting the current trend.

Now we can say that much depends on what society policymakers want to see. "The major element determining the conception and design of policies remains the set of prevailing cultural values, social ideas and historical legacies" (Lewis 2009: 202). If gender equality is not mainstreamed as a key policy goal, it is problematic to expect that reconciliation for women is assumed to constitute a policy that promotes gender equality.

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