

Working Women's Roles in Slovenia: Conflict or Enrichment?

Eva Boštjančič

Department of Psychology, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

Abstract. In the past, men and women had different experiences in balancing their professional and family lives. This is why they see their roles differently today. Our scope of interest in this article is employed women in Slovenia. Working women's various roles today may lead to conflict or enrichment. This study seeks to determine the connection between their multiple roles, life orientation, and life satisfaction. This study was carried out through Internet questionnaires and it surveyed 1,298 working women. Their average age was 35.6 years. A total of 43% of participants at least had a college degree. The results show that working women are the least satisfied with their leisure time and the most satisfied with their maternal role. Women with higher career satisfaction report about higher life satisfaction. Women with multiple roles are more satisfied with their maternal role but less satisfied with their partners and leisure time. They are also more optimistic.

Key words: women, work, role, life orientation, life satisfaction, Slovenia

The twenty-first century is presenting new challenges for working women and men alike. This paper mainly focuses on the role of working women engaged in various social and personal roles. These women are more strongly involved in both work- and family-related roles. The statistical data are quite revealing. According to the Slovenian Statistical Office (Vertot, 2008), 61.8% of women are employed, which is higher than in the EU (57.2%). The share of the population enrolled in tertiary-level education is increasing. Among those enrolled in two-year vocational colleges, three-year junior colleges, and undergraduate programs, a full 58.3% are women. A similar percentage can be found in the United States, where 57% of college graduates, 58.5% of master's program graduates, and 30% of MBA graduates are women. In 2006, 61.9% of tertiary-level graduates were women. In most western countries parental leave is only available for those who have worked for their current employer for a certain period of time. In Slovenia a mother gets 100% paid maternity leave for 12 months and a father gets 11 days

paid. There is also an official policy for part-time work for mothers with young children. The pre-school care is appropriately organized, but not for free – parents pay contributions based on their average family incomes. However, the position of women on the labour market does not reflect this: more men than women are employed, more women than men are unemployed, and women earn 15% less per hour than men and have more difficulties being promoted than men. As a result, the European Commission adopted the 2006–2010 Roadmap for Gender Equality, followed by the European Council's Pact for Gender Equality, both proof that the EU is actively pursuing genuine gender equality.

Background

Women's lifecycle. There are gender differences in the lifecycle. There are many life patterns (work, marriage, family), but two are the most frequent in Slovenia. The first pattern starts with primary education, followed by the opportunity to pursue vocational or high school education. Women choose their vocations, find their first jobs, and get pregnant. After pregnancy, some additional training is often necessary in order to return to work, where they remain until retirement. The second pattern takes women to college after high school, followed by their first jobs and initial career building. The near future entails a pregnancy, followed by training to return to work. After training, women usually set out to build their career until retirement (Alexander, 1993). According to Powell and Mainiero (1992), women continuously pay attention to career building and family relations, but their focus shifts over time. However, under present circumstances lifecycles are diverging from the ones described, given that the childbearing age is increasingly shifting towards the mid-thirties. Moreover, an increasing number of women are choosing career over family, thus consciously giving up the latter.

Women and employment. Employed women are mentally healthier (Barnett & Baruch, 1985) and in comparison to unemployed women they less often develop psychopathological symptoms and increased blood pressure when faced with stressful events (cf. studies by Brown, Bhrolcrain, & Harris and by Hauenstein, Kasl, & Harburg, as cited in Baruch, Biener, & Barnett, 1987). Some studies have shown that employed women are less depressed than unemployed ones (cf. studies by Aneshensel and by Kandel, Davies, & Ravies, as cited in Barnett & Hyde, 2001).

Women and career. After examining literature from the past fifteen years, Stoltz-Loike (1992) identified four factors that influence women's careers: the husband's view of his wife's job, financial prospects, household work, and the woman's character. During their careers, both men and women can climb the corporate ladder; higher positions offer more positive opportunities for women: promotion, a sense of responsibility, self-respect, and financial independence (Argyle, 1999; Crompton & Lyonette, 2004). At the same time, such positions positively affect women's roles in their social, economic, and private lives (Ufuk

& Özgen, 2001). Businesswomen often suffer due to conflicts arising from the different roles they play as professionals and within their families (Ufuk & Özgen, 2001). If they have to choose between different roles, they more often spend time on their family and work, leaving less time for themselves and relaxation (Stevenson, 1988). The most common stressors are unsatisfactory demands on the labour market, excessive expectations from family members, and physical exhaustion. Also, personality traits are important – life satisfaction is linked to numerous successful outcomes in one's life: higher sociability and activity ($r = 0.51$), altruism ($r = 0.43$), linking of self and others ($r = 0.36$), effective conflict resolution skills ($r = 0.33$) (Lyubomirsky, Diner & King, 2005).

Women and the family (partner, marriage, children). Marriage is a great source of life satisfaction among adults (Argyle, 1999), and so divorce could worsen women's situations. Changes in professional roles exert a stronger influence on the mental health of women without families (Barnett et al., 1992). Similarly, women with preschool children face less stress if they are employed (cf. a study by Kessler & McRae, as cited in Barnett & Hyde, 2001). Some studies (Schoon, Hansson, & Salmela-Aro, 2005) point out that being a parent does not significantly correlate with life satisfaction. However, for divorced women the combination of parenthood and employment correlates with low life satisfaction. Divorced women tend to be more satisfied when childless. Most couples are more satisfied than divorced persons, and the employed are more satisfied than the unemployed.

Two theories' perspectives on the role of working women. An attempt to look at women's role in modern society from a theoretical and scientific standpoint reveals that women's roles are defined by the social and cultural values of the society they live in (Oppong & Abu, 1985). Most women play several roles in their adult lives. These roles mix with their private (mother, wife, and housewife) or professional (employee, manager, or director) lives. On the one hand, modern society sees women as part of their families, which is also their most important role; on the other hand, they are expected to work and earn a living. This can lead to overload or a role conflict. In the past, the relations between roles have mostly been studied through the prism of negative consequences (Barnett, 1998; Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1999; Haas, 1999). Nevertheless, modern trends are establishing a different, positive take on this – more precisely, how a combination of different roles enriches women's development (Kirchmeyer, 1992; Rothbard, 2001), positively strengthens it (Crouter, 1984; Grzywacz, 2000; Summer & Knight, 2001), stimulates it (Ruderman, Ohlott, Panzer, & King, 2002; Tiedje et al., 1990), and enables it (Frone, 2003; Tompson & Werner, 1997; Wayne, Musisca, & Fleesen, 2004).

Playing several roles at a time is a source of numerous challenges for women. Researchers' opinions differ on whether more roles stimulate women's effectiveness or impede it. Gove (1984) and Schoon et al. (2005) advocate the theory of stressful roles. They argue that the combination of having to raise

children and work at the same time has negative repercussions on women's health and wellbeing. They claim that an individual simply cannot reconcile work and family (cf. a study by Farmer, as cited in Schoon et al., 2005). Dividing time between children and work can lead to role conflict and put pressure on women, leading to disease and stress. Women that feel their roles are conflicting are more depressed and less satisfied with their parenting role (Tiedje et al., 1990). On the other hand, the accumulation theory argues that multiple roles generally have a positive influence on a person's life satisfaction, wellbeing, and health (cf. studies by Helson, Elliott, & Leigh; Lahelma, Arber, Kivelä, & Roos, and Sieber, as cited in Schoon et al., 2005). Researchers believe that the satisfaction obtained from different roles (worker, partner, and parent) outweighs potential stress. Paid work outside the home enables additional social contacts and professional challenges, and contributes to better self-esteem and financial independence. Reconciliation of parenthood with work helps a person find satisfaction in one area of life when there are problems in another (cf. a study by Fokkema, as cited in Schoon et al., 2005). The theory of role accumulation has been confirmed by several studies that have shown that men and women engaged in different social roles experience fewer physical and psychological problems connected to stress and report feeling better than individuals engaged in fewer roles (cf. studies by Barnett & Marshall, Crosby & Jaskar, and Thoits, as cited in Barnett & Hyde, 2001). Higher life satisfaction is linked to full-time employment (Schoon et al., 2005) and paid work (Argyle, 1999; Warr, 1999).

Personality of employed women. Personality variables (for example, a dispositional optimism in our research) seem to play a strong role in determining individuals' level of subject well-being (Diener & Lucas, 1999). Optimistic persons adjust more favourably to important life transitions (Aspinwall & Taylor, 1992) and they tend to use more problem-focused coping strategies than do pessimists. Optimistic women respond better to the failure of an unsuccessful in vitro fertilization than do women who are more pessimistic (Litt, Tennen, Affleck, & Klock, 1992). There are several factors influencing life-satisfaction: social relationships, work (school) or performance in an important role such as grandparent, researcher or manager, and personal factors – satisfaction with the self, religious or spiritual life, learning and growth, and leisure. Past researches showed that satisfaction with life has been associated with health (Willits & Crider, 1988), social interaction (Gibson, 1986), personality (McCrae & Costa, 1991), income and social class (George, 1990), and the experience of various positive life events (Magnus, 1991). It is important to notice that about 80% of the variance in long-term stable levels of subject well-being could be attributed to inborn temperament (Lykken & Tellegen, 1996). Life satisfaction is also influenced by events such as widowhood (Lucas, Clark, Georgellis, & Diener, 2003) or unemployment (Lucas, Clark, Georgellis, & Diener, 2004).

O'Neil, Hopkins, and Bilimoria (2008) conducted a review of studies pertaining to the described area from the past 20 years. They pointed out several

patterns and the resulting discrepancies between descriptions in the literature and in practice:

- To women, a career is more than work; it is part of a broader life context. However, organizational reality calls for a division between career and other parts of their lives;
- Family and career are the focus of women's lives. In practice, for women family is an obligation and responsibility that affects their career development;
- Women's careers are formed by different paths and patterns. Nevertheless, the reality is that organizations mostly reward vertical and mobile career paths;
- Human and social capital are key factors in women's career development. On the other hand, an increase in human and social capital does not necessarily enable women to make it to the top or break the glass ceiling.

Based on numerous studies and interesting findings so far, two research hypothesis were formed regarding employed Slovenian women:

H₁: Women's life orientation – optimism (Scheier, Carver & Bridges, 1994) is positively associated to their perception of career, children, and perception of partner's role.

H₂: Positive association between the multiple roles women play and life orientation (optimism) and life satisfaction (Diener, Emmons, Larsen & Griffin, 1985).

Method

Participants. The study included 1,298 employed Slovenian women, whose average age was 35.6 years ($SD = 8$). The youngest participant was 19 and the oldest 64. On average, the participants had been employed for 12 years ($SD = 7.6$). The majority was married (48%) or with a partner (35%), 12% were single, and 5% divorced or widowed. Regarding education, 43% had a two-year vocational college, three-year junior college, or undergraduate education, 16% had a post-undergraduate certificate, master's degree, or PhD, 23% completed only high school and 18% only primary school. Regarding their area of employment, the sample was heterogeneous: 49% worked in business, 24% in state administration, 19% in education, 3% in healthcare, and 5% in other fields.

Measures. Demographic data on the participants were collected in the first part of the questionnaire. The second part started with a check-list of 20 different suggestions of roles that one woman could play in her life and continued with questions on satisfaction with various roles (motherhood, hobbies and leisure time, employment, and partners). A scale from 1 to 5 was used for self-assessment (1 = I am not satisfied at all, 5 = I am very satisfied).

The Scheier, Carver, and Bridges (1994) Revised Life Orientation Test (LOT-R) focused on and measured life orientation (optimism-pessimism). This test includes ten items describing optimism and pessimism, of which only six were later assessed (e.g., If something can go wrong for me, it will) while four were fillers. Participants rated items on a five-point scale (1 = strongly agree, 5 = strongly disagree). The test's internal reliability is 0.78 (Scheier, Carver, & Bridges, 1994) and 0.72 for the present study.

The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) followed. This was developed by Diener, Emmons, Larsen, and Griffin (1985) to measure participants' global assessment of their

quality of life according to personal criteria. The scale is comprised of five items (e.g., In most ways my life is close to my ideal). The participant answered on a seven-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). Cronbach's α equals 0.88.

Procedure. Data collection for the study took place in July and August 2008. The questionnaire was available on-line and at the beginning it was distributed via e-mail to about 50 different women in Slovenia employed in business and in education. The participating women further forwarded it to others – friends, peers, relatives. Anyone with an e-mail could participate.

Results

Satisfaction. Women are most satisfied with their parental (maternal) role. On average, they rate their satisfaction as 4.3 (on a scale of 1 to 5). They are least satisfied with their leisure time, for which the average is 3.4. Career satisfaction was rated at 3.6 and partner satisfaction 4.2. Statistically significant differences were revealed only for career ($F(4, 1258) = 3.62; p < 0.01$) by area of employment.

Table 1
Women's career satisfaction: various areas of work

	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
State administration	313	3.56	0.96
Other	39	3.56	1.19
Business	629	3.58	0.98
Education	246	3.81	0.92
Healthcare	36	3.89	0.98

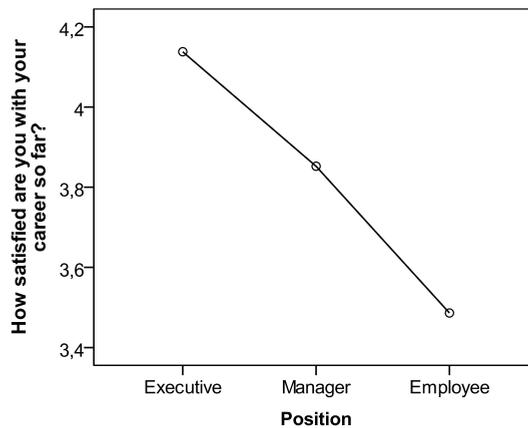


Figure 1. Interaction between position and career satisfaction.

When assessing work satisfaction the highest rating was given by women employed in healthcare and pharmaceuticals ($M = 3.89$; $SD = 0.98$), followed by women in education and business. The least satisfied are women in state administration ($M = 3.56$; $SD = 0.96$). With regard to the different hierarchical positions of women in organizations, they chose between three positions currently held in the organization: executive, manager, or employee. The most satisfied women are executives (Figure 1), followed by female managers, whereas the least satisfied are women in non-managerial jobs ($F(2, 1279) = 31.15$; $p < 0.01$).

Compared with managers and employees, female executives are also the most satisfied with their lives (Figure 2); the female employees are the least satisfied ($F(2, 1093) = 7.24$; $p < 0.01$).

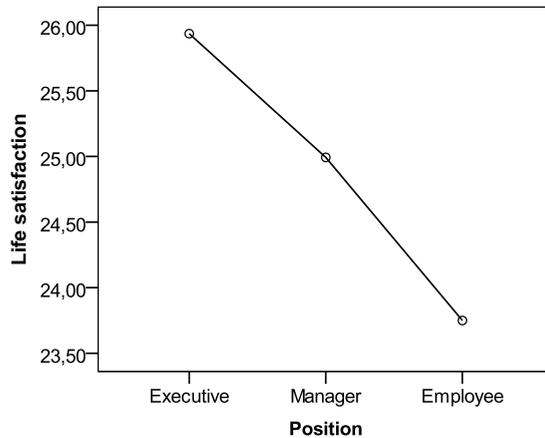


Figure 2. Interaction between position and life satisfaction.

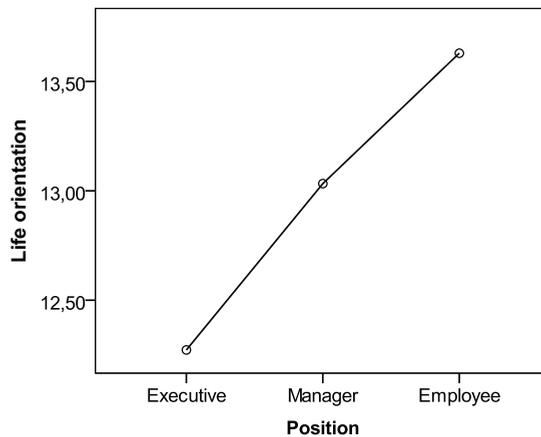


Figure 3. Interaction between position and life orientation.

Although the graph slope in Figure 3 is rising, it points out a high level of optimism among executives, which diminishes with lower positions ($F(2, 1080) = 4.75; p < 0.01$). On average optimistic women express greater work satisfaction ($r = -0.26; p < 0.01$). This finding supports the first part of the established hypothesis H_1 .

Table 2
Correlation between type of satisfaction and demographic variables

	Type of satisfaction			
	Career	Parental	Leisure time	Partner
Age	-0.029	-0.086*	-0.091**	-0.259**
Seniority	-0.033	-0.084*	-0.080**	-0.239**
Education level	0.235**	0.039	0.059*	0.062*
Profession	0.028	0.043	-0.071*	0.003
Professional status	0.004	0.003	0.090**	0.090**

* $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$.

As shown in Table 2, the correlations between types of satisfaction are statistically significant, but relatively low. Participants with the highest level of education are more satisfied with their careers ($r = 0.23; p < 0.01$). Higher age and seniority are linked to lower parental satisfaction, and lower satisfaction with partners and leisure-time quality. Women whose work entails more responsibility are more satisfied with their leisure time and partners. And last but not least, the correlation between LOT-R Optimism scale and Life Satisfaction scale is significant and negative ($r = -0.42; p < 0.01$), which we can interpret as a high positive connection between optimism (more optimistic women had lower scores) and the life-satisfaction construct (more life-satisfied women had higher scores). The next step is to measure an interaction effect between career satisfaction and work position on the life satisfaction outcome variable. The univariate analysis of variance shows significant influence, $F(13, 1075) = 2.04; p < 0.05$. This analysis revealed that women's career satisfaction influences their life satisfaction, but the position does not have an important role in it.

Partner. Women who currently have a partner (compared with the single-divorced women group) are more satisfied with their lives ($F(1, 1001) = 39.92; p < 0.01$). 50.1% state they share household chores equally; 45.2% say they themselves do 70% of the work, which leaves 30% for the partner. Single and divorced women find more satisfaction in balancing work and leisure time ($F(1, 1177) = 14.71; p < 0.01$). The satisfaction with this role is not statistically significant in relation to life orientation which disproves part of hypothesis H_1 .

Parenthood. The majority of women believe that the right time for motherhood is when they want to have children (65%) or up to age 30, when women are not yet in executive positions (28%). The following questions were answered only by women who had already experienced motherhoods: the majority of women decided to become mothers prior to turning 30, when they were not yet in executive positions (51%), 25% had an unplanned pregnancy, 13% gave birth to their first child while they were college students, and 10% had children later on, after they had accomplished what they desired at work.

The number of children affects women's lives and their way of thinking. Women that have more children have less time for themselves ($\delta = -0.21$; $p < 0.01$). Such women also spend less time with their children (probably because their time is divided between several children) ($\delta = -0.59$; $p < 0.01$). Women with more children are more pessimistic ($\delta = 0.08$; $p < 0.01$), but there was no statistically significant connection between perception of motherhood role and life orientation of participants. This finding does not support part of hypothesis H₁. On the other hand, happier women spend more time with their children ($\delta = 0.12$; $p < 0.01$).

Women without children are the most satisfied with their partners; the least satisfied in this regard are women with two children. Women with one child, or three or more, find themselves in the middle regarding partner satisfaction ($F(3, 1008) = 19.99$; $p < 0.01$). Women without children are the most satisfied with their leisure time, and women with children less so ($F(3, 1184) = 17.91$; $p < 0.01$). Women with three children are the most satisfied with life in general, followed by women without children and with two children. The least satisfied in this regard are women with only one child ($F(3, 1092) = 4.44$; $p < 0.01$).

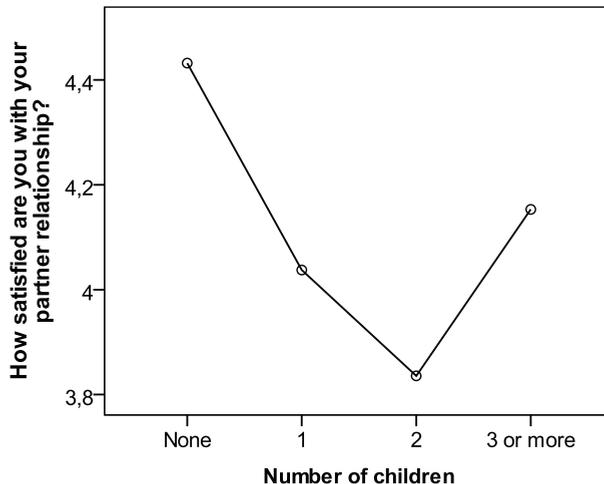


Figure 4. Interaction between number of children and partner relationship satisfaction.

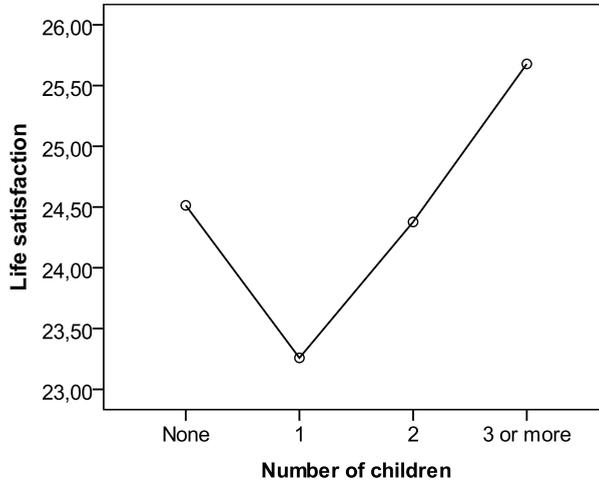


Figure 5. Interaction between number of children and life satisfaction.

The age of children also plays an important role. The older children are, the more time women devote to household chores (probably because they have more time on their hands). With the age of children, both parental satisfaction ($F(3, 814) = 3.33; p < 0.01$) and partner satisfaction ($F(3, 750) = 6.90; p < 0.01$) decrease. However, once children find a job or perhaps leave home (after college), partner satisfaction increases again. Life satisfaction also decreases, but goes up again when children start to work ($F(3, 748) = 10.93; p < 0.01$).

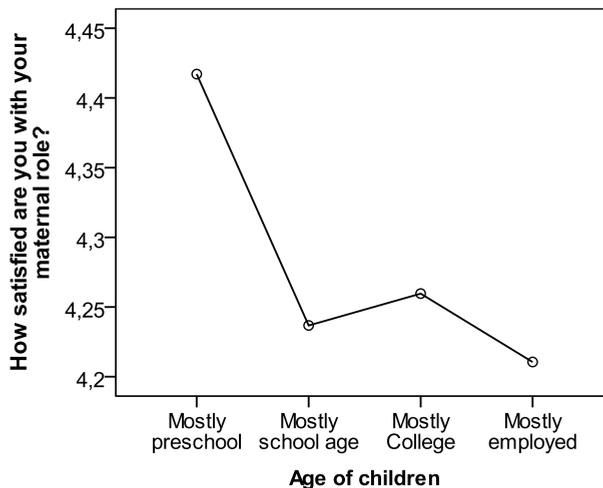


Figure 6. Interaction between children's ages and satisfaction with maternal role.

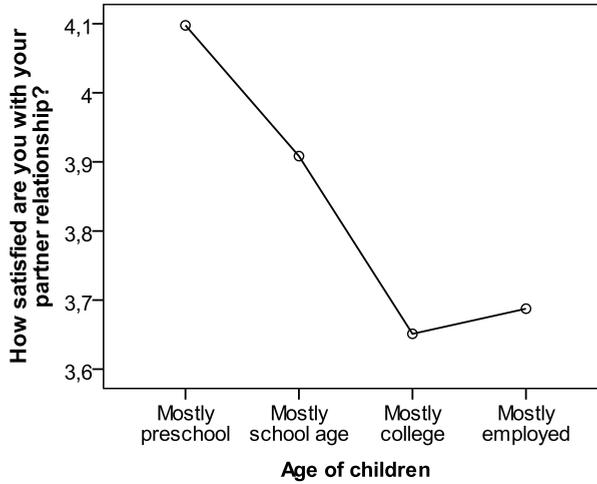


Figure 7. Interaction between children's ages and partner relationship satisfaction.

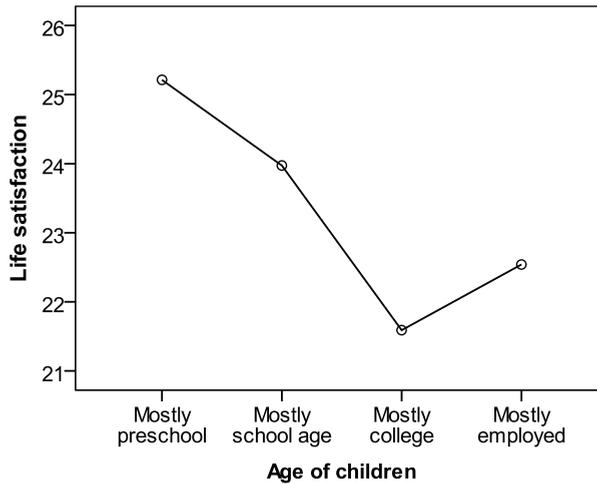


Figure 8. Interaction between children's ages and life satisfaction.

Time for household chores and children. Most women (70%) spend less than 2 hours per day on their household, and 30% spend 2 to 4 hours daily. Given their position at work, female employees devote the most time to household chores, followed by female executives, whereas female managers do the least. The differences between them are statistically significant ($F(2, 1182) = 3.31$; $p < 0.05$).

Most women spend on average more than 4 hours with their children (41%), followed by women who spend 2 to 4 hours with their children daily (35%). The number of women who spend less than 2 hours daily with their children is the lowest (24%).

Number of roles. Finally, in order to establish which factors affect the number of roles employed women have, three sets of variables were included in the hierarchical regression analysis. The first variables are education level and career satisfaction, both pertaining to job satisfaction. The second part includes variables linked to private life satisfaction, and the third includes two variables linked to individuals' general orientation: life satisfaction and life optimism or pessimism.

Table 3
Hierarchical regression analysis model: influence of independent research variables on the number of roles employed women play

Model		1	2	3
1	Level of education	0.13**	0.13**	0.12**
	Career satisfaction	0.01	0.02	0.01
2	Satisfaction with maternal role		0.08*	0.08
	Leisure-time satisfaction		-0.09*	-0.09*
	Partner relationship satisfaction		-0.03	-0.02
3	Life orientation			-0.09*
	Life satisfaction			-0.03
	R ²	0.02	0.03	0.03
	F	6.42**	3.99**	3.48**

* $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$.

Table 3 shows that the number of roles women assume in their lives is primarily influenced by their education and partially by satisfaction with their maternal role. Optimism also positively correlates with the number of roles women identify as their own which partly supports hypothesis H₂.

DISCUSSION

In modern society, women are caught between several roles. The society or women's immediate surroundings expect them to perform each role successfully. In her article on parenting versus careers for women, Bobovnik (2007) considers the period in which women are ready to take on one and/or the other. Of course, she finds no right answer to this question. This study seeks to answer the following question: How are the roles of working women linked to their

personal characteristics and other demographic factors? Another question arises as well: is there a conflict in women balancing family and work?

It is interesting that a great number of the questionnaires distributed online were completed and returned. This is a good indicator and can forecast the future orientation of psychological research – in areas that allow such methods, of course. Such an approach makes broader and international studies possible. According to Davis (1999), the use of the Internet enables access to a greater sample of participants, who then participate in data collection; in turn, this is faster and guarantees complete anonymity. Anonymity can have a positive influence on the tendency to give socially desirable answers. At the same time, as confirmed in the study on filling out personality questionnaires via the Internet (Kveton, Jelinek, Klimusova, & Voboril, 2007), such a method is a reliable one and will be useful in the future.

The first question is how life orientation, whether optimism or pessimism, influences working women's views. Optimists expect positive things to happen. They have faith in themselves and put a lot of effort into the work they do. The LOT-R questionnaire directly measured the level of optimism. It was established that the most optimistic participants were female executives. Descending the hierarchical ladder, optimism decreases; this is perhaps linked to lower income, unfulfilled wishes, or problems encountered at the outset or during the career. Because optimism is a relatively stable personality trait, career counselling should caution people in advance on the advantages, challenges, and disadvantages of a particular job as well as which personal traits are expected given the nature of work.

Does work influence satisfaction? As early as 1983, a study by Freudiger revealed that there are small differences between life satisfaction among women that used to be employed, were employed at the time, and had never been employed. Employed Japanese women with more children perceived themselves as effective parents and reported greater life satisfaction (Holloway, Suzuki, Yamamoto, & Mindnich, 2006). Such parallels are perhaps difficult to transpose into the Slovenian or European context; however, it can be stated with great certainty that satisfaction at work is linked to different external and internal factors. In this study, the most common answers to the question "What does being employed mean to you?" were personal fulfilment ($n = 893$), social security ($n = 866$), and, on the other hand, burden and stress ($n = 190$), giving up many things ($n = 116$), and being a woman in a man's world ($n = 92$).

Women in Slovenia are most satisfied with their maternal role and partners, and less satisfied with their career and the quality of their leisure time. Motherhood and the partner relationship can be combined under the common denominator of a factor that women can directly influence. On the other hand, career and leisure time are influenced by several external factors, such as relations at work, opportunities for promotion, and physical working conditions. Satisfaction with the partner relationship increases with age, in contrast to satisfaction with the

parental role and leisure time. Education level is often an important demographic variable. This study has shown that a higher level of education is linked to career satisfaction; nevertheless, it negatively influences leisure time spent away from work. This connection makes sense because higher education enables more rapid promotion followed by higher and more responsible positions, which in return leaves less time for quality leisure. At the same time, career satisfaction strongly correlates with life satisfaction ($r = 0.41$; $p < 0.01$), which illustrates the mutual influence of these two variables. In practice, this can be seen as all-round care for employees as a workforce and as individuals that live their family and professional lives in parallel. Satisfaction at work will be reflected in general satisfaction; at the same time, the order of private life will be reflected in career satisfaction (i.e., job satisfaction). A large German longitudinal study carried out over 22 years must be mentioned as well; it established that greater shifts in life satisfaction occur in relation to distance to death (time distance) rather than distance from birth (chronological age; Gerstorf, Ram, Stabrook, Schupp, & Wagner, 2008). Hence, regardless of satisfaction in old age, general satisfaction slightly decreases.

Women give birth regardless of the differences and similarities between genders. The experiences and recommendations of the 1,298 women that participated in this study show that it would be good and maybe also recommended to have children up to age 30 or prior to assuming an executive position. That data may reflect an optimal time for first-time motherhood, but we need to consider the limitations of our sample. Optimism increases with the number of children (with the first optimism plummets, but then increases again). An interesting finding reveals that satisfaction with the partner relationship decreases with the birth of the first child and worsens with the second, but the third might bring about higher tolerance or cooperation and understanding between partners and with this increased partner satisfaction. DeFour and Brown (2006) came to a similar conclusion when they established that mothers that see their children as the greatest joy in life report higher family satisfaction. Holloway et al. (2006) established a positive connection between the number of children and commitment to the maternal role with Japanese women. The women in this study connect their role as mothers with personal fulfilment ($n = 744$), giving up many things ($n = 396$), and being a woman ($n = 365$).

New challenges and obstacles arise with every career period and so, with age, views on motherhood, partners, and life change. The period of children's schooling is undoubtedly a watershed that significantly decreases satisfaction with the maternal role, partner relationship, and life satisfaction. The reasons for such a change can primarily be found in the greater psychological and time burden on mothers, who complain about having to devote more leisure time to children once they start school. With schooling comes adolescence and puberty, bringing about a different manner of communication in the family. For many parents, this is too great a change. As a result, they start questioning their roles as

mothers or the quality and success of their partner relationship. In any case, this piece of information is important in practice. It should be understood that this coincides with the period (usually between age 35 and 50) when women climb the corporate ladder. On the one hand, they are faced with family challenges, including communication with adolescents, their successes and failures in school, and first broken hearts; on the other hand, they often occupy leading positions, which, as demonstrated in this study, entail significant efforts, giving up many things, and a lack of leisure time.

The results presented here should be summarized for particular groups of women employed at different hierarchical levels in an organization. Leading managers, such as directors, businesswomen, and board members, are (as expected) satisfied with their careers and the successes they have achieved in their professional lives. This agrees with the findings of Crompton and Lyonette (2004), who say that higher positions offer more positive opportunities: promotion, a sense of responsibility, self-respect, financial independence, and so on. As established earlier, such satisfaction correlates with life satisfaction; however, women in this group are characterized by only moderate optimism. The reasons for such a world view can be found in the fact that they bear great responsibilities and are well informed and familiar with the current economic and political situation. Leisure-time satisfaction is high as well, which correlates with better financial opportunities, making quality and more expensive activities and help with the household possible. All of this leaves time for hobbies and various forms of relaxation. On the other hand, these women are dissatisfied with their maternal role, for which they probably lack time and energy. This group of women can be characterized as career oriented, whereas their counterparts are women to whom career is of little importance. A 1987 study (Pietromonaco, Manis, & Markus, 1987) revealed that career-oriented women with full-time employment are more satisfied with themselves and their lives than women that only work part-time or are unemployed. When describing themselves, these women list numerous characteristics in connection with their positions. It would be interesting to examine the influence of gender on the opportunity for promotion (data are unavailable), studying the perceptions of both female and male managers.

Female managers are usually bound directly to the organization, at the same time being responsible for their subordinates' results as well as the performance of all tasks assigned by their superiors. These are women that have already advanced in their careers; nevertheless, their further promotion depends on them alone – their management, motivation, and delegation skills, focus on results and achievements, and so on. This study shows that this group of women is fairly satisfied with their career and life, but sees life least optimistically. Having to prove oneself at work leaves little time for household chores and relaxing hobbies. Such women are primarily fulfilled by the great satisfaction found in motherhood and in their partners. In practice, the findings primarily

reveal a need for greater attention to this group. Women in this group need more relaxation, earned leisure time, and perhaps greater concern for their private lives on the part of their superiors. One suggestion is clearer career planning, allowing them to see the reward (i.e., promotion) for achieving the goals set. Small tokens of appreciation from an employer can help increase effectiveness at work and, indirectly, career and life satisfaction.

The final group of women is as important as the rest and includes female employees without managerial authority, who are pessimistic but satisfied with their lives. What are the reasons for this combination? These are mostly employees without high ambitions, who like to do routine everyday work and do not seek greater authority or responsibility. Hence, they remain in their positions; however, lower positions entail less pay. Less money also means lower material security. These women are less satisfied with their careers, their partners, and the quality of their leisure time. Limited leisure time may again be linked to lower income. It can be presumed that fixed working hours leave them with more time for household chores.

Going back to the theories of multiple roles, it has been established that women that assume several roles are slightly more optimistic ($r = -0.067$; $p < 0.05$). Multiple roles correlate positively with parental satisfaction ($r = 0.07$; $p < 0.05$) and negatively with partner relationship ($r = -0.10$; $p < 0.05$) and the quality of leisure time ($r = -0.16$; $p < 0.01$). The correlations are low, making it impossible to confirm the stress role theory or the theory of role accumulation.

What next? What are the opportunities for women's development? Newspaper articles and studies in this area (Avberšek, 2006) currently show that the share of female managers is between 3% and 20% in any particular organization. There are several reasons for this low percentage (Kanjuo Mrčela, 1996): it can be seen as an underestimation of women's management style, the unbreakable glass ceiling, a lack of role models, sexual harassment, family obligations, frequently limited geographical mobility, and traditional prejudices, including emotional instability and absenteeism, and so on. On the other hand, this is an area that is being increasingly discussed, studied, and written about. There is a gradual process of awareness-raising taking place; slowly, but steadily, facts are being brought to light, and numbers are dispelling myths, discrimination, and false beliefs.

This study has continually raised new questions that could provide valuable answers for understanding the lives of working women and at the same time possibly improve social and economic policies in employment:

- Which factors influence women's decisions to choose a professional or management career?
- What is the influence of women's immediate and extended family and family patterns on career planning?

- Because this study was conducted during the summer of 2008 (prior to the recession), it would be interesting to repeat it at least in part and compare the results on the optimism and satisfaction of the same participants.
- And last but not the least: Are findings in this research unique to women or do they characterize men as well?

REFERENCES

- Alexander, L. (1993). *Career planning for women: How to make a positive impact on your working life*. Plymouth, UK: How To Books.
- Argyle, M. (1999). Causes and correlates of happiness. In D. Kahneman, E. Diener, & N. Schwartz (Eds.), *Well-being: The foundations of hedonic psychology* (pp. 353–373). New York: Sage.
- Aspinwall, L. G., & Taylor, S. E. (1992). Modeling cognitive adaptation: A longitudinal investigation of the impact of individual differences and coping on college adjustment and performance. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 63, 989–1003.
- Avberšek, A. (2006). *Ženske na vodilnih managerskih položajih v delniških družbah v Sloveniji – empirična analiza, neobjavljeno diplomsko delo*. Ljubljana. Ekonomska fakulteta.
- Barnett, R. C. (1998). Toward a review and reconceptualization of the work/family literature. *Genetic, Social, and General Psychology Monographs*, 124, 125–182.
- Barnett, R. C., & Baruch, G. K. (1985). Women's Involvement in Multiple Roles and Psychological Distress. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 49 (1), 135–145.
- Barnett, R. C., & Hyde, J. S. (2001). Women, men, work, and family: An expansionist theory. *American Psychologist*, 56, 781–796.
- Barnet, R. C., Marshall, N. L., & Pleck, J. H. (1992). Men's multiple roles and their relationship to men's psychological distress. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 54, 358–367.
- Baruch, G. K., Biener, L., & Barnett, R. C. (1987). Women and gender in research on work and family stress. *American Psychologist*, 42, 130–136.
- Bobovnik, K. (2007). Starševstvo in/ali kariera? *Panika*, 11(1), 9–11.
- Crompton, R., & Lyonette, C. (2004). *Work-life balance in Britain and Europe*. Paper presented at the Work-Life Conference in Edinburgh, UK.
- Crouter, A. (1984). Spillover from family to work: The neglected side of the work-family interface. *Human Relations*, 37, 425–442.
- Davis, R. N. (1999). Web-based administration of a personality questionnaire: Comparison with traditional methods. *Behavior Research Methods, Instruments, & Computers*, 31, 572–577.
- Diener, E., & Lucas, R. E. (1999). Personality and subject well-being. In D. Kahneman, E. Diener, & N. Svharz (Eds.), *Well-being: The foundations of hedonic psychology* (pp. 213–229). New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Diener, E., Emmons, R. A., Larsen, R. J., & Griffin, S. (1985). The Satisfaction with Life Scale. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 49, 71–75.
- DeFour, D. C., & Brown, T. M. (2006). Attitudes toward maternal roles and effects on life satisfaction: Black, Hispanic, and White models. *Journal of African American Studies*, 20(3), 3–18.
- Freudiger, P. (1983). Life satisfaction among three categories of married women. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 45(1), 213–219.
- Frone, M. R. (2003). Work-family balance. In J. C. Quick & L. E. Tetrick (Eds.), *Handbook of occupational health psychology* (pp. 143–162). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

- Gerstorf, D., Ram, N., Stabrook, R., Schupp, J., & Wagner, G. (2008). Life satisfaction shows terminal decline in old age: Longitudinal evidence from the German socio-economic panel study (SEOP). *Developmental Psychology, 44*(4), 1148–1159.
- George, L. K. (1990). Social structure, social processes, and social psychological states. In R. H. Bismark & L. K. George (Eds.), *Handbook of aging and the social sciences*, 3rd ed (pp. 186–204) San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Gibson, D. M. (1986). Interaction and well being in old age: Is it quantity or quality that counts? *International Journal of Aging and Human Development, 24*, 29–40.
- Gove, W. R. (1984). Gender differences in mental and physical illness: The effects of fixed roles and nurturant roles. *Social Science and Medicine, 19*, 77–91.
- Greenhaus, J. H., & Parasuraman, S. (1999). Research on work, family, and gender: Current status and future directions. In G. N. Powell (Ed.), *Handbook of gender and work* (pp. 391–412). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Grzywacz, J. G. (2000). Work-family spillover and health during midlife: Is managing conflict everything? *American Journal of Health Promotion, 14*, 236–243.
- Haas, L. (1999). Families and work. In M. Sussman, S. K. Steinmetz, & G. W. Peterson (Eds.), *Handbook of marriage and family*, 2nd ed. (pp. 571–612). New York: Plenum Press.
- Halloway, S., Suzuki, S., Yamamoto, Y., & Mindnich, J. D. (2006). Relation of maternal role concepts to parenting, employment choices, and life satisfaction among Japanese women. *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research, 54* (3–4), 235–249.
- Kanjou Mrčela, A. (1996). *Ženske v menedžmentu*. Ljubljana: Enotnost.
- Kirchmeyer, C. (1992). Nonwork participation and work attitudes: A test of scarcity vs. expansion models of personal resources. *Human Relations, 45*, 775–795.
- Kveton, P., Jelinek, M., Klimusova, H., & Voboril, D. (2007). Data collection on the internet: evaluation of web-based questionnaires. *Studia Psychologica, 49*, 81–88.
- Litt, M. D., Tennen, H., Affleck, G., & Klock, S. (1992). Coping and cognitive factors in adaptation to *in vitro* fertilization failure. *Journal of Behavioral Medicine, 15*, 171–187.
- Lucas, R. E., Clark, A. E., Georgellis, Y., & Diener, E. (2003). Reexamining adaptation and set point model of happiness: *Reactions to changes in marital status*. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 84*, 527–539.
- Lucas, R. E., Clark, A. E., Georgellis, Y., & Diener, E. (2004). Unemployment alters the set-point for life satisfaction. *Psychological Science, 15*, 8–13.
- Lykken, D., & Tellegen, A. (1996). Happiness is a stochastic phenomenon. *Psychological Science, 7*, 186–189.
- Lyubomirsky, S., Diner, E., & King, L. (2005). The Benefits of Frequent Affect: Does Happiness Lead to Success?, *Psychological Bulletin, 131* (6), 803–855.
- Magnus, K. B. (1991). *A longitudinal analysis of personality, life events, and subjective well-being*. Unpublished manuscript, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.
- McCrea, R. R., & Costa, P. T. (1991). Adding liebe and arbeit: The full five factor model and well being. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 17*, 227–232.
- O'Neil, D., Hopkins, M. M., & Bilimoria, D. (2008). Women's Careers at the Start of the 21st Century: Patterns and Paradoxes. *Journal of Business Ethics, 80*, 727–743.
- Oppong, C., & Abu, C. (1985). *A handbook for Data Collection and Analysis on Seven Roles and Statuses of Women*. Genova: ILO Publications.
- Pietromonaco, P. R., Manis, J., & Markus, H. (1987). The relationship of employment to self-perception and well-being in women: A cognitive analysis. *Sex Roles, 17*(7/8), 467–477.
- Powell, G. N., & Mainiero, L. A. (1992). Cross-currents in the river of time: Conceptualizing the complexities of women's careers. *Journal of Management, 18*, 215–237.

- Rothbard, N. P. (2001). Enriching or depleting? The dynamics of engagement in work and family roles. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *46*, 655–684.
- Ruderman, M. N., Ohlott, P. J., Panzer, K., & King, S. N. (2002). Benefits of multiple roles for managerial women. *Academy of Management Journal*, *45*, 369–386.
- Scheier, M. F., Carver, C. S., & Bridges, M. W. (1994). Distinguishing optimism from neuroticism (and trait anxiety, self-mastery, and self-esteem): A re-evaluation of the Life Orientation Test. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *67*, 1063–1078.
- Schoon, I., Hansson, L., & Salmela-Aro, K. (2005). Combining work and family life: Life satisfaction among married and divorced men and women in Estonia, Finland, and the UK. *European Psychologist*, *10*, 109–319.
- Stevenson, L. (1988). Women and Economic Development: A Focus on Curriculum Vitae Entrepreneurship. In D. Ray (Ed.), *Journal of Development Planning, Entrepreneurship and Economic Development* (pp. 113–126). New York: United Nations Publication.
- Stoltz-Loike, M. (1992). The working family: Helping women balance the roles of wife, mother, and career woman. *The Career Development Quarterly*, *40*(3), 244–256.
- Summer, H. C., & Knight, P. A. (2001). How do people with different attachment styles balance work and family? A personality perspective on work-family linkage. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *86*, 653–663.
- Tiedje, L. B., Wortman, C. B., Downey, G., Emmons, C., Biernat, M., & Lang, R. (1990). Women with multiple roles: Role-compatibility perceptions, satisfaction, and mental health. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, *52*, 63–72.
- Tompson, H. B., & Werner, J. M. (1997). The impact of role conflict/facilitation on core and discretionary behaviors: Testing a mediated model. *Journal of Management*, *23*, 583–601.
- Ufuk, H., & Özgen, Ö. (2001). Interaction Between the Business and Family Lives of Women Entrepreneurs in Turkey. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *31*, 95–106.
- Vertot, N. (2008). *Ženske v Sloveniji*. Retrieved from http://www.stat.si/novica_prikazi.aspx?id=1497
- Warr, P. (1999). Well-being and the workplace. In D. Kahneman, E. Diener, & N. Schwartz (Eds.), *Well-being: The foundations of hedonic psychology* (pp. 392–412). New York: Sage.
- Wayne, J. H., Musisca, N., & Fleeson, W. (2004). Considering the role of personality in the work-family experience: Relationship of the big five to work-family conflict and facilitation. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *64*, 108–130.
- Willits, F. K., & Crider, D. M. (1988). Health rating and life satisfaction in the later middle years. *Journal of Gerontology: Social Sciences*, *43*, S172–S176.