

Female participation in the labour force



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INTRODUCTION

Female participation in the labor force has been a compelling issue throughout the history. It is also a very dynamic topic in all countries independent of that development level. It's because, the place of women in work life can be considered as brand-new subject compared to that of men in all societies. Therefore, from 1980's the states which are more classified as welfare states like Sweden, Norway and The Netherlands have been trying to implement some social policies in order to increase women participation in the labor force.

In this paper, I would like to propose a study to find out the relation between female participation in the labor force and social policies implemented by states. My plan is more to focus on women's point of views and their perception of family policies. More specifically, I am interested in mothers and what sort of influences that family policies have on mothers in terms of their participation in work life. The reason makes me sceptic about this issue is that family policies can have negative results on mothers which is considered as "mommy track" in the literature. (Ejnæs, 2011, p. 242) ^[1]

As I mentioned before both women studies and welfare state studies are new phenomena and there is barely a research especially on mothers and the consequences of the policies rather than type of policies. For this reason, I believe there is a lack in the literature that allows me to make a research on this crucial issue. If there is a significant relationship between female participation in the workforce and family policies done by state? Even though my starting point is thinking that these policies have negative results on

women's participation in labor force. In literature there is quite disagreement in interpreting policies' results as good or bad. However, even current literature is rich about consequences of family policies, there is still lack of study which looks at the issue from mothers' point of views. Hence, through this study I would like to contribute to literature while showing mother's perception of family policies.

The proposal begins with literature review. Second, it describes offered methodology and then finally I will elaborate what kind of further studies can be done depending this research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Although traditional family structure, which encourages male participation in the labor force for breadwinning, is changing recently, parenthood still has a huge negative effects on female. That is because women are still recognized as most important caregivers. Most of the time, the place of women has been fixed within the private sphere, in other words within their home life. Thus, literature of family policies' effects on the labor force mostly focuses on women and especially mothers.

As I mentioned above, despite the fact that researchers use the same subject for their research, there is a disagreement about how do they describe the effects of family policies. Now, I will summarize some important works which try to understand issue of family policies and its effects on the female participation in the labor market.

OECD (2005) focuses on the consequences of policy reforms and policies that regulate female participation in the labor market. The author accepts the flexibility of working-time arrangements, family taxation, to support to maintenance and care of children as indicators of policies that affect female participation in the labor market. OECD claims that more flexible working-time causes more opportunity to access to part-time works for women increase female participation. Moreover, if second earners of home and single earners are taxed in the same way, it would be an increase in female labor force. In addition to that according to OECD findings childcare subsidies and parental leave promote female participation but there is a trick in parental leave if it is more than 20 weeks, it begins to create negative consequences on participation rate. On the other hand child benefit reduces women participation in the labor market after the birth. Basically, they claim that longer prenatal leave duration and high child benefits lead to 'sit back and earn' idea in families. The author uses OECD's database and analyze 17 OECD countries for panel data regression. (OECD, 2005)

Mandel and Semyonov (2006) try to understand women participation in labor market and their occupational achievement among welfare state. They assumed that the state has two dimension; as a legislator and as an employer. For both two perspectives, they claimed that family policies in welfare states increase women participation in the workforce. However, this situation does not solve the problem of gender inequality and gender wage gap. Either women get paid with lower salaries because of their 'excuse time' or maternal leave is given one-sided which creates an unequal division of labor between father and mother to take care their babies. They analyze

22 countries and their findings depend on Welfare State Intervention Index and Luxemburg Income Study. (Mandel & Semyonov, 2006)

Warnecke (2008) conduct a research about that although Spanish government try to regulate family policies such as maternal leave, child benefits and child provision, why there is a still lower female participation in the workforce. She claims that all social policies' consequences differ in different countries and on different group of women in one country. In the Spain case; the maternal leave has a negative impact on mother's decision about returning work force. That is because there is a social support for a traditional division of labor in Spain. Woman who uses maternal leave start to see her child as a main occupation and do not want to reenter her position in the worklife. The author uses one case study as a method for her study. (Warnecke, 2008)

Another one case study analyzes Sweden. Evertsson and Duvander (2011) analyze Sweden because that there is flexibility about length of maternal leave. They claimed that if the length of the maternal leave, which is one of the most important family policy as they claim, is more than 3 years, women would become less willing to go back to their job. In addition to this, employers become skeptic about women's productivity and work effort. Accordingly, even though some women want to go back to their job, they have hard times to find one and because of the less opportunity of finding a job, their salaries are considered as favour by employers and they are generally lower compared to male workers who are count as more constant and reliable for companies. (Evertson & Duvander, 2011)

Ejnæs (2011) aims to show relationship between family policies and mothers' choices between work and childcare and perceived occupational consequences of that choices. He analyzes maternal leave and child care in 5 different countries depending on Round 2 of the European Social Survey. He uses " multivariate logistic regression model" for his research. (Ejnæs, 2011, p. 246) His findings show that long maternal leave policies discourage women to go back to their work but on the other side of the coin, short maternal leave and lack of child care force women to choose early return or unemployment. In the case of mother's perception, long maternal leave and childcare provision reduce mothers' negative feeling about their career.

METHODOLOGY

First of all, family policies and mothers' perception of career are the main concepts in this research. Family policies aim to increase women participation to labor force and they are regulated by state. These policies try to regulate market itself by taxation or women's participation to work force. In this research, I will use length of maternal leave as an indicator for family policies. That is because only maternal leave has direct effects on mothers' daily life. In addition to that, generally, most of the researchers consider that maternal leave is the most important measure. (Henning, Gatermann, & Hägglund, 2012) I will use OECD (2005) database for operating family policies. Another concept is mothers' perception about their future and present career. I mean that I will research mothers' feelings and opinion about their present and future career after the maternal leave. What are the effects of state policies on mothers' subsequent life outcomes? I will use mothers' feeling and opinions about that they whatever they will come

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back to labor market or not as an indicator. I will use my survey's result for operating mothers' perception.

Secondly, my research question is the following: is there a relationship between the length of maternal leave and the perception of mothers' about their career? Accordingly, my hypothesis is that there is a relationship between the length of maternal leave and the negative perception of mothers' about their career. In this hypothesis, the length of the maternal leave is the dependent variable and mothers' perception is the independent variable. I measure mothers' perception in the nominal and ordinal level by doing survey. I use ratio level of measurement for length of maternal leave.

I will use qualitative methods to conduct this research. That is because mothers' perception about their career is an empirical variable. I mean that it is a human behavior and linked to how mothers feel and act. In addition to this, I want to show that deeper causes of mothers' non-reenter in labor market and I will not use numerical and statistical variables for my research. This kind of variable is measured by qualitative methods. Although qualitative method is the most appropriate method for my research, there are some possible disadvantages. First of all, qualitative methods are more expensive from quantitative methods and it takes more time than other methods. Secondly, in qualitative methods, researches' bias effect is inevitable but I try to reduce this effect by my research design which I you will show next paragraph. Finally, qualitative methods are not generalizable easily because it is not statistical.

I will plan to conduct a survey. This survey should be a personal interview. My target of survey must be mothers who have at least one year work experience before having baby. That is because I want to eliminate mothers who have already no willingness about their future and present career. In addition to that, I will choose mothers that are in the decision making process about their career. This process corresponds to one month ago before that maternal leave is finished. Moreover, interviewers of my research should be women. That is because mothers are more comfortable about their feelings in front of their fellows. As I mentioned above, I have a target group for my research, so my sample must be non-probabilistic and it should be purposiveness. I want to choose sample groups through Austria, France, Denmark, and United State of America, Australia and United Kingdom. I choose first three of them because that they have the longest maternal leave process. I choose United State of America, Australia and United Kingdom because that they have the shortest length of maternal leave. (OECD, 2005) After that for each country, I will try to access mothers who have at least one year work experience by using data from public employment offices or ministries of labor. Possible questions that the survey includes will try to figure out women's perception with as little bias as possible. For instance, participants will be asked how much time they have spent at home just because to take care of their children. This question aims to understand that to what degree women have dependency to their homes and children. Subsequently, the participants will be asked some questions about family policies of their countries. Potential questions for this section would be: (1) How maternal leave affects your feeling and opinions about your business life? (2) Why do you work before having baby? (3) Does your

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children have any health problem? (4) Do you have any relatives who can help you about childcare? (5) What do you think about the length of maternal leave? (6) Do you think maternal leave changes your perception about your career? (7) Are you divorced/single parent?

Question 3 and 4 aim to understand if mothers are not returning their work because of economic difficulties or not and the rest of the questions intend to focus on mothers' perception and their psychological condition about maternal leave and working after birth.

Finally, I want to discuss my measurements' reliability and validity. It should be known that each respondent has different characteristics. This diversity might reduce our survey reliability. For making my survey is more reliable I will use split half method- designing the same question in different words to eliminate different characteristics of respondents. I assume that these qualitative questions combined with field work will give me consistent results about women's perception of maternal leave and their participation in the labor force.

CONCLUSION AND FURTHER RESEARCH TOPICS

In this section, I will discuss further research question that would be asked based on my potential results.

First of all, I am aware that even though women perception will give us a different angle while critising family policies of the states, the culture and family structures that women are part of are very influential on women decisions. For this reason, more anthropological researchs can be done to

figure out the divergence of reentering decisions of women. Each country can be elaborated with their different cultural rituals and it can be seen that to what extent that particular culture fosters gender stratification.

Secondly, I will conduct my research in country-level. But, it is possible that even within a country, the regions can affect policies, perceptions and opportunities of women to return the work life. Thus, regional-level survey may help us to see regional differences if there is any.

Finally, I believe the most important aspect of my research is to be based on my main target group, mothers. Thus, in any case the attempt to understand mothers' perception on maternal leave will be valuable for further researchs both culturally and politically.

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[1] Ejnæs cited this concept from Fraser, N., 1994,'After the family wage; Gender equity and the welfare state', *Political theory* 22(4): 591-618