

Satisfaction with the Work-Life Balance: Working Women's View (Regional Aspect)



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Abstract. One of the employee's objective needs is an appropriate balance between work and private life. The article presents a comparative study of satisfaction with the work-life balance among working women with and without children. Based on the materials of a questionnaire survey of the Vologda Oblast working-age population, conducted in 2018, we investigate the features of perception of the following aspects of work and family life: satisfaction with the ability to combine work and family responsibilities, the impact of work on various aspects of daily life, the ability to organize recreation, the presence of problems related to one's close environment, qualitative characteristics of work. We have revealed that working women with and without children have predominant positive or neutral impact of work on daily life, and there are no significant differences in the number of working days per month and the actual length of the working day. We have found that women without children often perform extra work, are less able to organize their

For citation: Belekhova G.V., Ivanovskaya A.L. (2022). Satisfaction with the work-life balance: Working women's view (regional aspect). *Economic and Social Changes: Facts, Trends, Forecast*, 15(1), 209–222. DOI: 10.15838/esc.2022.1.79.11

leisure time, and are harsher in relation to their close environment. However, there are no significant differences in satisfaction with the work-life balance among women with and without children. The paper determines that working women (regardless of parental status) who satisfactorily assess the ability to combine work and family responsibilities are characterized by better indicators of labor activity (fewer delays and disruptions in work, less failure to fulfill plans, etc.), a higher level of realization of physical, personal and professional abilities in work. The similarity of the subjective perception of the work-life balance among working women with and without children may indicate women's high adaptability to multitasking and time allocation. We highlight the importance of improving the policy on family and employment, in particular in terms of developing flexible employment formats.

Key words: woman, work-life balance, subjective assessment, sociological survey, satisfaction, working day, leisure, labor potential.

Acknowledgements

The research was funded by the RFBR, project no. 19-310-90047 "Development of methodological approaches and methodological tools for analyzing and evaluating the quality of working life of the employed population of the region" (competition "Graduate students").

Introduction

Despite technological and social changes (employment intensification, spread of flexible forms of employment, digitalization of life, empowerment of women's rights and possibilities, etc.), a departure from the unambiguous distribution of roles between a man as a "breadwinner and earner" and a woman as a "home keeper", in the public consciousness and scientific discussion, the problem of combining a woman's work and family responsibilities does not lose relevance. "The gender contract of the "working mother" is still dominant, which implies that women combine permanent employment with family and household responsibilities" (Antoshchuk, Gewinne, 2020; Tiomkina, Rotkirch, 2002, p. 8). According to Russians, a man under 30 should get an education (65%), get married (56%), make a career (52%) and have children (40%), while a woman should get married (77%), have children (75%), get an education (60%), learn to cook (52%), and only 19% believe that she should make a career. Along with this, the predominant share of respondents notes that at the birth of a child, a woman should devote herself to the upbringing (up to 3 years –

44%, before school – 20%) and only after that return to work¹. Gender is manifested in the division of household responsibilities: a woman is more engaged in household chores (50% of respondents believe so; 62% is among women and 35% among men), in children upbringing (47%; 54% is among women and 38% among men), while the family's financial support falls on the shoulders of men (53%)².

These stereotypes manifest themselves in "gender segregation of labor, in which men work in more paid and prestigious economic sectors

¹ Levada Center survey*. It was conducted on August 7–10, 2015 on a representative All-Russian sample of urban and rural population among 800 people of 18 years old. The statistical error does not exceed 4.1%. See: 30-year milestone: gender roles and stereotypes. *DemoskopWeekly*, 2015. Available at: <http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/2015/0653/opros03.php> (accessed: June 22, 2021).

* It is entered in the register of foreign agents.

² VCIOM-Sputnik survey. It was conducted on March 10, 2019. The survey method is a telephone interview based on a stratified two-base random sample of landline and mobile numbers of 1,600 respondents aged 18 and over. The sampling error does not exceed 2.5%. See: Gender equality in Russia: Myth or reality? *DemoskopWeekly*, 2019. Available at: <http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/2019/0811/opros01.php> (accessed: June 22, 2021).

than women” (Lytkina, 2004, p. 86). According to the ILO, “globally, women’s work is paid about 20% less than men’s work, even when they do the same job”³.

Despite the existing views, women are currently very active in the field of economics. So, in Russia in 2017, female employment rate was 60% (against 71.5% for men), including women aged 20–49 with children under 18 years old – 77.9%, women with children under 3 years old – 48.9%⁴, which indicates a noticeable involvement in labor relations of women with children. But due to the presence of a dependent burden of children, and the responsibilities of motherhood, women have to face the task of optimizing the combination of professional employment and family responsibilities. In Russia, as well as all over the world, the problem of finding the work-life balance is called one of the main problems faced by women working in paid jobs⁵. This problem is mentioned significantly more often (35%) than “low salaries” (22%), “difficulties in promotion” (19%) and “lower earnings than male colleagues” (19%) (Kochergina, 2017, p. 185). Unsatisfactory distribution of time between work and private life, suboptimal combination of professional development and family responsibilities can have serious consequences for women (tension, stress, deterioration of health, decreased work efficiency, etc.), which can lead to conflicts in the family, problems at work, and decrease in life satisfaction in general.

³ Women Workers’ Initiative: An impetus for equality. ILO. Geneva, 2018. Available at: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_630128.pdf (accessed: June 22, 2021).

⁴ *Women and men of Russia. 2018: Stat. Coll. Rosstat*. Moscow, 2018. Pp. 106–107. The collection is published every 2 years.

⁵ Towards a better future for women and work: Voices of women and men. Gallup, Inc.; The International Labour Organization (ILO). 2017. Available at: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_546256.pdf (accessed: June 22, 2021).

A review of scientific journalism shows that many researchers consider the problems of the work-life balance by either through the study of families with two working adults, or through the comparison of women without children and mothers. At the same time, the conclusions quite clearly indicate that “the search for the work-life balance is considered as a female problem” (Chernova, 2012, p. 296) and often leads to negative effects: “combination of employment and parenting turns out to be a very difficult and painful period of women’s working life” (Nekrasova, 2013, p. 82), “women with children have lower productivity on average and prefer employment in jobs requiring less responsibility and intensity of work” (Arzhenovskii, Artamonova, 2007, p. 67), “other things being equal, family responsibilities make women a less competitive workforce, as a result of which women are forced to choose between children and work, or put up with the need to combine household responsibilities and work”⁶.

In our opinion, in modern conditions, prolonged systemic discrimination of women with children in work is largely leveled, and, moreover, women (with and without children) have a high adaptability of behavior in the labor market. At the same time, for every working woman, the optimal ratio between professional and private life is purely individual. Therefore, we pay attention to the analysis of the subjective perception by working women of the work-life balance including in the presence/absence of a dependent load of children. In accordance with this, the purpose of the article is a comparative study of satisfaction with the work-life balance among working women with children (i.e. mothers) and without children, which will allow assessing the employment opportunities and limitations of women with different daily workloads and life priorities.

⁶ Roshchin S. Are women equal to men? Part 2. *Demoskop Weekly*, 2005. Available at: <http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/2005/0221/tema01.php> (accessed: June 22, 2021).

Research on the work-life balance: female aspect

The work–life balance construct⁷ was introduced into scientific circulation in the 1970s when studying the problem of combining the career and private life of a woman who could successfully realize herself in professional activity, without forgetting about her marital and maternal responsibilities (Barnett, Baruch, 1985). In fact, this is an artificial category designed to help understand the relationship between work (paid employment) and other areas in a person's life. In the scientific literature, the work-life balance is most often considered either as the degree of satisfaction of an individual with a combination of work and non-work activities (Isupova, 2019; Greenhaus et al., 2003), or as the ratio of a person's work and non-work roles in terms of conflict (Mospan et al., 2016; Clark, 2000), or as an individual's ability to optimally allocate their own resources (time, knowledge and skills, material resources, etc.) in the spheres of life (i.e. from the point of view of control) (Koltsova, 2014; Voydanoff, 2005).

To assess the balance, we use options for direct subjective assessment by individuals of the ratio of work and private life, which is obtained during questionnaires or interviews. A number of studies apply one key question identifying subjective satisfaction with the work-life balance: “How satisfied are you with the ratio of the time you spend at work and the time you devote to other aspects of your life?” (Strebkov, Shevchuk, 2019), “Are you satisfied or not satisfied with the balance between your work or main activity and family life?” (Saltzstein et al., 2001); “Do you have enough time left after work to fulfill family and other social obligations?” (Antai et al., 2015). In other studies,

the authors focus on an integrated approach and analyze several aspects of balance, often with an assessment of psychological attitudes. In particular, the three-component approach of J. Greenhouse et al. (time balance, spent on work and family life, psychological involvement in them and satisfaction from work and family life) (Greenhaus et al., 2003); subjective-structural approach of A.N. Mospan et al. (perception of the work-life relationship, self-assessment of the importance of spheres and the time and effort spent on them, satisfaction with the state of affairs in each sphere) (Mospan et al., 2016). In foreign practice, there are also studies of the “time-use survey”, for example, the “OECD Family Database” compiled by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, which records “working hours, time for rest and personal needs, travel time to work, satisfaction with time distribution”⁸.

In the context of the chosen issues, studies of the distribution of family's responsibilities show that after a labor day, a working woman begins the so-called “second shift” in the form of household chores (parenting, cooking, cleaning, etc.). The phenomenon of women's “dual employment” or “double responsibility” is interpreted as a combination of paid work by women with the workload of home and child-rearing. Household responsibilities can be classified as manual, physical, monotonous labor, but the scientific literature does not provide optimal standards for its measurement (Gruzdeva, 1994). At the same time, as foreign studies show, working married couples who try to share household responsibilities equally are more satisfied with both family and professional life, and, in the end, with life in general⁹.

⁷ In the empirical part of the study, we use the translation of the English term “work-life balance” as “баланс труда и семьи”. In our opinion, this formulation is more harmonious in the context of the study, as we consider the ratio of only family and professional (labor) spheres of life of working women (i.e. we do not take into account health, self-development, social life, etc.).

⁸ The labour market position of families (LMF). *OECD*. Available at: <http://www.oecd.org/social/family/database.htm> (accessed: June 22, 2021).

⁹ Groysberg B., Abrahams R. Manage Your Work, Manage Your Life. *Harvard Business Review*, 2014, no. 3. Available at: <https://hbr.org/2014/03/manage-your-work-manage-your-life> (accessed: August 06, 2021).

There are widely presented studies of balance among women engaged in both “feminized” activities (education, healthcare, etc.) (Rozhdestvenskaya, 2019; Kumari, Devi, 2015) and in traditionally male industries (Isupova, 2019; Podol’skaya, 2019). This problem is also considered in the context of family policy and social stereotypes (Chernova, 2012), from the perspective of the possibilities of the digital economy and the remote labor market (Baskakova, Soboleva, 2018).

A separate layer consists of works on studying strategies for combining female professional and family responsibilities (housewife, working mother, business woman, etc.). In particular, the research shows that the younger a woman is, the more often she chooses to combine career and parenting (Nekrasova, 2013), and strategies of full dedication to either career or motherhood are much less attractive (Savinskaya, 2013). We have found that, on average, Russian women spend about 30 hours per week on basic household chores, while men spend 13 hours (Evstifeeva, 2013). However, women, working on an equal footing with men, perceive housework and motherhood as a natural process and are ready to devote themselves to both professional and family life (Mikhailova, 2017). This conclusion is confirmed by a sociological study by T.M. Karakhanova and O.A. Bolshakova on the combination of work and family activities, according to which 56% of the women surveyed replied that “a woman should distribute her time equally, not to the detriment of either the first or the second” (Karakhanova, Bolshakova, 2018). At the same time, only 6% of respondents adhere to the opinion that a woman should have professional activity in the first place, and then – family, household, children” (Karakhanova, Bolshakova, 2018).

Summarizing the foregoing, we note that the problems of “dual employment”, the search for work-life balance, the choice of a strategy for combining professional and family (including parental) responsibilities are widely covered in

the scientific literature. For the most part, it is considered as a female problem, as a feature of women’s gender strategy. At the same time, the issue of women’s subjective well-being, their perception of their existing combination of work and family, primarily maternal, responsibilities, has been poorly studied.

Materials and methods

In this study, we consider the work-life balance as the degree of satisfaction of an individual with a combination of work and non-work responsibilities, as in the research (Isupova, 2019; Greenhaus et al., 2003). The assessment of the degree of satisfaction with the balance is carried out within the framework of a subjective approach (as, for example, in (Strebkov, Shevchuk, 2019; Antai et al., 2015; Wepfer et al., 2015)) by determining the subjective attitude of working women to the following aspects of work and family life:

1) satisfaction with the ability to combine work and family responsibilities is a summary characteristic of the work-life balance, typical of the subjective perception of balance between these areas. The question “Are you personally satisfied with the opportunity to combine work and family responsibilities?” is used. The answers “satisfied” and “rather satisfied” correspond to satisfaction, the answers “unsatisfied” and “rather unsatisfied” correspond to dissatisfaction, the answer “Hesitate to respond” corresponds to a neutral position;

2) the degree of influence of work on various aspects of daily life is assessed by the question “How does work affect [family; leisure, hobbies, interests; maintaining health, communicating with friends and relatives, spending holidays]?”. The answers “positively” and “rather positively” are interpreted as “positive influence”, the answers “negatively” and “rather negatively” are interpreted as “negative influence”, the answer “does not affect” corresponds to a neutral position, the answer “Hesitate to respond” indicates the respondent’s uncertainty;

3) the ability to organize leisure characterizes an integral aspect of daily life (leisure) and is evaluated by the question “To what extent do you have the “ability to organize your leisure, rest”?”. The respond options “in full”, “sufficiently” are described as a good skill; the answers “generally sufficient”, “little, insufficient” are described as a bad skill;

4) psychological markers of the work-life balance in the form of the presence/absence of issues with inner circle are assessed by the question “Have you ever felt guilty because of [insufficient attention to parents (mother, father); poor attitude to children (your own or others’)]?”.

Additionally, we will analyze the features of labor activity among working women with varying satisfaction degrees with the work-life balance. To achieve this goal, we will consider the following indicators:

1) indicators of labor activity – considering them in the context of satisfaction with the ability to combine work and family responsibilities will allow tracing the balance impact on labor activity. They are evaluated by the question “Which of the following characterizes your work activity?” (non-compliance with production standards, delays, disruptions in work, rationalization proposals);

2) labor potential and its realization rate. We use the analysis of two-dimensional distributions between satisfaction level with the ability to combine work and family responsibilities and labor potential quality index, indices of realization rate of the qualitative characteristics of labor potential. The indices are calculated according to the methodology, used at the Vologda Research Center of RAS (Wepfer et al., 2015; Leonidova et al., 2018). According to it, the structure of labor potential quality is a multi-level system, based on eight basic components: physical and mental health, cognitive and creative potentials, communication, cultural and moral standards, and achievement need. They form structural elements of a higher level, and at

the top of the “tree” there is an integral indicator – social capacity which characterizes the general state of labor potential quality. The indicated elements are calculated based on the respondents’ subjective assessment of the development degree of a particular qualitative characteristic, each of which corresponds to its own set of questions in the questionnaire, and are expressed as an index (the upper limit is 1, and the lower one is in the range from 0.200 to 0.333). In turn, realization rate of labor potential quality is determined by mathematical processing of sociological data, obtained when respondents answered the question about the intensity of the use of accumulated opportunities during the performance of labor duties (Leonidova et al., 2018).

The information base of the study is a sociological survey of the working-age population “Labor potential quality”, conducted in 2018 in the Vologda Oblast by the Vologda Research Center of RAS. The sample size is 1,500 people. The survey was conducted in Vologda and Cherepovets, in urban and rural areas of Babaevsky, Velikoustyugsky, Vozhegodsky, Gryazovetsky, Kirillovsky, Nikolsky, Tarnogsky, Sheksninsky districts. The sampling method is zoning with proportional placement of observation units. The sample type is quota by gender and age. The method of collecting empirical data is individual handout questionnaire. The sampling error is no more than 3%. Data processing was carried out in the SPSS Statistics program.

The methodological feature of the analysis was the exclusion from the number of male respondents and those who answered the question about employment “I do not work (including on parental leave, etc.)”. Thus, the subsample for analysis included only women working at the time of the survey who have children, i.e. mothers, and women without children (a total of 535 people).

The socio-demographic profile of working women with and without children is similar (*Tab. 1*). Among mothers, 44% have one child, 45% have 2

Table 1. Sample characteristics

Characteristic	Women		Women without children				Women with children			
	without children	with children	16–25 y.o.	26–35 y.o.	36–45 y.o.	46 years and older	16–25 y.o.	26–35 y.o.	36–45 y.o.	46 years and older
Interviewed working women, people	111	424	31	39	11	30	11	146	149	118
Category share, %	21	79	28	35	10	27	3	34	35	28

Note. Children's age was not specified in the questionnaire.
According to: Data from the sociological survey of the employed population of the Vologda Oblast, VolRC RAS, 2018.

children, 9% have 3 children, and the remaining 2% of mothers have 4–5 children. Most of the mothers are married (67%), the rest are either single (26%) or live together outside of an official marriage (7%). Among working women without children, the majority are single (56%), the rest are either married (27%) or live in domestic partnership (17%). Among women without children, the proportion of those who indicated incomplete higher education is higher (12% vs 1% among mothers), i.e. these are working students. Women are mostly mid-level specialists (39% of women without children and 38% of mothers). They are less likely to be employed as highly qualified specialists, and there are more of them among mothers (16% and 23%, respectively). Managers of various levels are 13% of women without children and 14% of mothers. Women with children work mainly in state and municipal enterprises (40% compared to 25% among women without children), perhaps because the public sector is a more stable place of work with better compliance with social guarantees. Women without children are more likely to indicate an individual or private enterprise as a place of work (27% vs. 22% among mothers).

The majority of women (57% of women without children and 56% of mothers) have sufficient material resources to buy the necessary products and clothing, but larger purchases are difficult. About a third of women are in distress: they either have money only for food (24% of women without children and 34% of mothers), or they do not have enough money even for food products and have to

get into debt (7% of women without children and 2% of mothers).

Results and discussion

Satisfaction with the ability to combine work and family responsibilities. For women without children, the actual duration of a normal working day is 8.6 hours, for women with children it is 8.3 hours; the average number of working days per month for the former is 19.4 days, for the latter – 19 days (*Tab. 2*). As we can see, the differences are insignificant, although “mothers of children under 14 years old can work part-time at will”¹⁰.

Women with no children are more likely to perform additional work (17% vs. 12.5% among women with children), the duration of which is about 2 hours a week, which is slightly more than that of mothers. Both female groups take home work (*Tab. 2*). The main reason is the profession features, which is more typical for women without children (60% vs. 46% of mothers). Women with children are more likely to note interest in work (21% compared to 10% of women without children), improper personal time planning (12%) and poorly planned work processes (5%; women without children did not specify these reasons).

The summary characteristic of the work-life balance – satisfaction with the ability to combine work and family responsibilities – is on average the same in the groups of women under consideration (51% among women without children, 48% among

¹⁰ Female labor activity: rights, guarantees, benefits. Garant. Available at: <http://base.garant.ru/57236617/#friends> (accessed: June 22, 2021).

Table 2. Duration of work and satisfaction with the ability to combine work and family responsibilities, % of the number of respondents

Indicators	Women without children	Women with children
<i>Duration of work*</i>		
Actual duration of normal working day (average value), hours	8.61	8.32
Average number of working days per month, days	19.39	18.97
<i>Extra work **</i>		
Have extra work	17.1	12.5
Average value, hours	1.94	0.95
<i>Work at home***</i>		
Yes, I have to take work home	18.0	15.6
<i>Satisfaction with the ability to combine work and family responsibilities</i>		
Satisfied + rather satisfied	50.5	47.6
Hesitate to respond	34.2	34.4
Unsatisfied + rather unsatisfied	15.3	17.9
For reference: Chi-square criterion (parental status) * satisfaction with the ability to combine work and family responsibilities)	0.489****	
<p>* The question is "How much time do you spend on your main job?" ** The question is "How many hours on average do you spend on extra work?" *** The question is "Do you have to take work home?" **** The Chi-square criterion value close to zero (0.489), with a significance level of 0.783 and 0% of cases with an expected frequency of less than 5, indicates the absence of a relationship between the variables under consideration. According to: Data from the sociological survey of the employed population of the Vologda Oblast, VolRC RAS, 2018.</p>		

mothers; *Tab. 2*). Mothers aged 26–35 (45%) and 36–45 (53%) are more likely to be satisfied, compared with women in the same age groups with no children (39 and 36%, respectively). Probably, mothers choose jobs with a more optimal schedule, which allows better combining different spheres of life. Women aged 46 and older (63%) who have no children are more satisfied with the work-family balance than the rest, who, most likely, have already realized themselves in the profession and managed to establish a harmonious private life. The greatest dissatisfaction with the combination of work and family responsibilities is demonstrated by women of 36–45 years old who do not have children (36%), which may be due to the psychological characteristics of middle age, the conflict between the achievements of working life and the typical way of life of a woman (marriage, family, parenting).

An interesting pattern can be traced when considering this indicator from the perspective of overall life satisfaction. For instance, among women

with no children who are dissatisfied with life in general, compared with mothers of this group, there are noticeably fewer of those who are unsatisfied with the possibility of combining work and family – 64% vs 75%. The revealed feature may indicate both the concealment by mothers of their negative attitude to the need to combine work and family responsibilities, and the possible lack of awareness of the presence of such dissatisfaction.

The degree of influence of work on various aspects of daily life. Women tend to evaluate the work impact in a positive or neutral way. To a greater extent, they say that there is no influence of work on communication with friends and relatives (46% of women without children and 44% of mothers think so), vacation (42% and 45%), leisure and hobby organization (41% and 46%), private and family relationships (40% and 43%). Also, according to the listed aspects of daily life, the proportion of women indicating a positive impact of work is higher than the proportion of those noting a negative impact (regardless of parental status).

The perception of the impact of work on maintaining health is less clear. Equal proportions of the surveyed women (without children and with children) give positive ratings (28% and 30%) or hesitate to respond (10% each). Women with children are more confident in the absence of the impact of their work on health (39%) and less likely to indicate a negative impact (21%). Women without children are not so specific in their perception: 32% note the lack of influence, 30% has negative influence. At the same time, the largest proportion indicating a negative effect of work on health is observed in women of the middle age (36–45 years) without children (55%), as compared to mothers of the same age (19%), and with other female groups. The observed patterns show that women with children either pay sufficient attention to their health, or because of dual employment (work and family) they have “no time to be sick” and no time to assess their health in a balanced way.

The ability to organize leisure and rest is more pronounced in women with children (68%, of which 44% have this ability to a sufficient extent, for 24% – in full) than in women without children (59%, of which 36% – sufficiently, for 23% – in full). Moreover, for the latter, poor development of this skill reduces satisfaction with the ability to combine work and family responsibilities: among women without children who are dissatisfied with this combination, most (53%) characterize their ability to organize a vacation as bad and a smaller part as good (47%). At the same time, for women with children, sufficient development of the considered skill does not provide a proportionate increase in satisfaction with the work-family balance: for the majority (57%) of mothers dissatisfied with the balance, good leisure management skills are characteristic, for a smaller part (43%) – poor. In other words, for women with children, a harmonious perception of the balance of work and family is determined by a combination of successfully implemented skills and roles in daily life.

Psychological balance markers. Guilt and remorse due to insufficient attention to their own parents are more often experienced by women without children (60% vs 39% of women with children), due to a bad attitude toward children (their own or others’) – equally both groups (35% each), while mothers worry much more (27% vs 18% of women without children). Subjective perception of the possibility of combining work and family responsibilities affects the circle of close communication of working women. Women who are satisfied with the work-family ratio do not allow situations of insufficient attention to parents, and there are more of them among mothers (64% compared to 52% among women without children), as well as situations of bad attitude toward their own or other people’s children (75% of mothers and 82% of women without children). We can assume that for mothers, the values of family and positive relationships between people are expected to be higher.

Labor activity characteristics of women without children and with children are very similar, although there are some differences. In particular, women without children are less likely to fail to fulfill work plans (39% vs 44% in the other group), and mothers are more disciplined and do not allow lateness, absenteeism or leaving work ahead of time (71% vs 65% of women without children). The majority of women in both study groups are engaged in submitting innovation proposals (69% of women without children, 67% of mothers). Women with children offer similar improvements often (21% compared to 12% among women without children), while women without children – from time to time (57% compared to 46% among mothers).

Women who are satisfied with the combination of work and family responsibilities, regardless of the parental status, have high labor productivity, frequent submission of rationalization proposals; they are also less characterized by non-compliance with production standards, lateness and absenteeism, various disruptions in work (*Tab. 3*).

Table 3. Satisfaction with the ability to combine work and family responsibilities and labor activity characteristics, % of the number of respondents

Labor activity characteristics	Women without children		Women with children	
	Satisfied	Unsatisfied	Satisfied	Unsatisfied
<i>Failure to comply with the working standard (plans), I do less than I am required to</i>				
It often happens	1.8	0.0	4.0	5.4
Sometimes it happens	28.6	41.2	26.7	64.9
It does not happen at all	69.6	58.8	69.3	29.7
<i>Lateness, absenteeism, leaving work ahead of time</i>				
It often happens	0.0	2.6	2.5	10.8
Sometimes it happens	26.8	42.1	16.3	33.8
It does not happen at all	73.2	55.3	81.2	55.4
<i>Disruptions in work: accidents have happened through your fault, equipment has been idle, mistakes in documentation, managerial, etc. have been made</i>				
It often happens	0.0	5.3	4.0	4.1
Sometimes it happens	21.4	31.6	16.3	43.2
It does not happen at all	78.6	63.2	79.7	52.7
<i>Submission of innovation proposals, suggestions for improving work in the workshop, department, etc.</i>				
It often happens	14.3	0.0	32.7	8.1
Sometimes it happens	58.9	47.1	44.1	43.2
It does not happen at all	26.8	52.9	23.3	48.6
<i>Average value of labor productivity on a 10-point scale</i>	8.38	7.41	8.48	6.59
According to: Data from the sociological survey of the employed population of the Vologda Oblast, VolIRC RAS, 2018.				

Consequently, working women (with and without children) who satisfactorily assess the work-life balance are characterized by better labor activity indicators.

Work-life balance and labor potential realization rate. The differences in the calculated labor potential indices between women without children and with children are minimal, with some advantage toward the latter. At the same time, the labor potential quality and realization rate of the qualitative characteristics of working women in labor activity significantly correlate with satisfaction with the ability to combine work and family responsibilities: in female groups with predominant positive assessments of this combination, the labor potential quality index and realization rate indices of its qualitative characteristics are noticeably higher (Tab. 4). In other words, women who satisfactorily assess the work-life balance, more fully realize their professional, personal and physical abilities at work.

Conclusion

In the conducted study, we have assessed the work-life balance through subjective feelings of satisfaction from the realization of some aspects of work and family life. According to the results, women without children are more likely to perform extra work, are less able to organize their leisure time, and are harsher in relation to their close environment. For women with children, i.e. mothers, a well-developed ability to organize recreation does not provide a commensurate increase in satisfaction with the work-life balance. Also, among mothers dissatisfied with life in general, compared with women without children, there are noticeably more those who are not satisfied with the possibility of combining work and family (75% vs 64%).

At the same time, satisfaction with the possibility of combining work and family responsibilities, the predominance of positive or neutral influence of

Table 4. The ability to combine work and family responsibilities and labor potential indices

Female groups according to the values of the index "The ability to combine work and family responsibilities"	Realization rate of qualitative characteristics of labor potential (%)								Labor potential quality index
	PH	MH	CP	CrP	PS	CS	MS	AN	
Women without children									
Positive assessments (level above 0)	65.3	71.9	58.0	47.8	68.8	68.7	71.9	57.8	0.7179
Neutral assessments (equal to 0)	54.1	56.1	43.4	35.5	53.9	46.6	54.5	47.0	0.6453
Negative assessments (level below 0)	53.5	59.4	42.0	28.3	56.6	52.5	55.6	40.2	0.6237
Women with children									
Positive assessments (level above 0)	63.2	71.3	57.1	48.1	70.1	67.8	74.3	56.8	0.7188
Neutral assessments (equal to 0)	56.9	59.9	45.8	36.7	59.8	54.8	59.2	46.7	0.6697
Negative assessments (level below 0)	53.7	55.4	41.1	32.2	60.6	52.5	57.0	38.4	0.6300
Note. PH – physical health; MH – mental health; CP – cognitive potential; CrP – creative potential; PS – people skills; CS – cultural standard; MS – moral standard; AN – achievement need.									
According to: Data from the sociological survey of the employed population of the Vologda Oblast, VolRC RAS, 2018.									

work on various aspects of daily life are on average the same for both female groups. Working women (with and without children) who satisfactorily assess the work-life balance are characterized by a positive perception of the circle of close communication, better indicators of labor activity and a higher realization rate of abilities in work. Consequently, we can talk about a weak recognition by working women of the presence of any discomfort from the combination of work and family responsibilities.

Answering the natural question "Why is it so?" we venture to assume that this is the influence of formed social stereotypes. The fact is that taking care of children is only one of the family responsibilities, which are mainly performed by women. A woman, even without being a mother, is more responsible for the family than a man, is more involved in solving daily household tasks (Kalachikova, Gruzdeva, 2019a; Kalachikova, Gruzdeva, 2019b; Mezentseva et al., 2009), perceives housework as a natural process (Mikhailova, 2017), and, consequently, is more adaptive to multitasking and time allocation.

We should note that work-life balance increases job satisfaction (Nilawati et al., 2019). However, in Russia it is not a priority of family and employment policy – institutional forms of support for working parents and remote work formats are practically not developed, targeted flexible employment programs for mothers are poorly developed (Chernova, 2012; Baskakova, Soboleva, 2018). Therefore, systematic work is needed within the framework of social and labor relations to solve these problems. As Doctor of Sciences (Economics) I.E. Kalabikhina notes, in relation to women, this work should include at least three areas: increasing the prestige of fatherhood and the development of the "care economy"; public assistance in child care (through public, private and public social organizations); socially responsible (friendly) employer and flexible employment regimes¹¹. The main work should be carried out "locally" and include those practices that will facilitate the combination of work and family life,

¹¹ Kalabikhina I.E. Work-life balance in demographic and family policy. *DemoskopWeekly*, 2016. Available at: <http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/2016/0671/nauka01.php> (accessed: December 22, 2020).

and which organizations will be able to introduce in addition to legislative requirements. Among them are an extraordinary vacation; child care services provided by the employer (or compensation for such costs); flexible working time schemes and expansion of remote employment opportunities.

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Received June 22, 2021.