

THE FEMALE STUDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS TELECOMMUTING AND ITS COHERENCE WITH FERTILITY

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Abstract

The article is devoted to the study of the young women's attitude towards remote work, although they are still only getting an occupation at the university. The aim of the research was to study the women opinion on the issue whether telecommuting could to increase the number of childbirth and could to improve the quality of children's life. The methodology of the study included carrying out a sociological survey by questioning female students. In Yekaterinburg megacity 207 respondents from six universities were interviewed in total. The results were received about the importance of each telecommuting job characteristic for female students. There were also asked questions about the desired number of children and preferences in choosing a job: standard (with a workplace inside a company) or remote. Based on the survey, some directions were proposed for the more effective practice of remote work in Russia.

Key words: telecommuting, fertility, remote work, students' attitude.

JEL Code: J13, J22, J24.

Introduction

The study, the results of which are described in this article, combines two actual scientific topics. First of all, this is about using remote work. Telecommuting is a work process carried out outside the traditional work place and involving interaction with the employer through information and communication technologies (Konobevtsev, 2011). The subject of this study was such telework when the employee operates the whole or almost the whole working time at home or in another place, but not at the employer's office. Such work is quite profitable for the entrepreneur. The benefits of using it are due to the fact that such employment does not require the additional workplace organization and maintenance, and consists of: reduction in the cost of renting a room; reduction in workplace organization costs; increasing staff

flexibility; the possibility of organizing round-the-clock information service to customers; labor productivity increased; increasing in staff loyalty (Sardarian & Barabanova, 2010).

For workers, the following benefits of using telecommuting are usually called: optimum work-life-balance; the possibility of obtaining education and participation in public life, etc.; the possibility of communications with third-party organizations and having additional earnings; increased work productivity, because it is carried out in the usual (home) atmosphere; reduction of time and costs for transport, exclusion of hitting traffic jams and stresses associated with them; reducing the risk of unplanned absenteeism; keep to individual biological rhythms, work and rest time, no need to wake up early or work until late evening (Polyanina, 2008).

However, the question remains unanswered if the work-life-balance optimization can lead to an increase in the birth rate. The fertility growth is also an actual scientific and management problem in Russia today. The reduction in the birth rate is determined by the fact that the number of fertile age women has significantly decreased, which is a consequence of the catastrophic decline in the birth rate in the late 1980s and early 1990s. According to calculations (Korotaev & Khalturina, 2011), a number of the Russian who were not born in the late 80's - early 90's is several times higher than a number of the Russian who were not born as a result of the Second World War. The birth rate decline in the 1990s leads already to a personnel shortage in the present Russian economy, and a further reduction in the working population can lead to a delay in economic development and cause migration problems.

The strategic aim of this research, carried out by the authors, is to find out, firstly, the motivation of young people receiving higher education, to work remotely and, secondly, whether telecommuting can influence on the decision to have more than one child.

1 Literature review

Different sciences study various aspects of remote work. To begin with, it is studied by the labor economy, which explores most often engaged remotely occupation (Annenko, 2017), influence of telework on social and labor relations (Menshikova & Fedorova, 2016) and at the labor market. Sociology studies the workers' attitude towards teleworking, its benefits and shortcomings. Medicine studies the impact of telecommuting on the workers health, in particular the presence or absence of a link between remote work and stress, obesity and other health problems (Henke, et al., 2016). Management determines what changes in personnel management methods are needed for remote workers.

The term "telecommuting", or "telework" was introduced by Jack Nilles in 1973. The theoretical foundation for the telecommuting study is: Job Characteristics theory, Adaptive Structuration theory and Work/Family Border theory. According to Job Characteristics theory, changes in autonomy and feedback influence work behaviors and attitudes more than a change in skill variety, task identity, or task significance (Oldham & Hackman, 2005). Since the remote work greatly adds autonomy in the work process, the authors' special interest is to study the young people attitude towards job in remote work conditions. Adaptive structuration theory suggests that when technologies are used over time, the rules and resources for social interactions will change (DeSanctis & Poole, 1994). In this connection, the authors are particularly interested in the process of the social interactions that related to the number and upbringing of children in the family. According to the Work/Family Border theory, people are daily border-crossers between the domains of work and family (Clark, 2000). At that point, the authors wondered how the penetration of production processes into family life affects the quality of children's life.

Previous studies showed that respondents with children rated the stress reduction and family benefits of telecommuting more highly than did those with no children at home (Mokhtarian, et al., 1998). Later studies have confirmed that women who have children less than five years old have a more favorable attitude towards telecommuting (Iscan & Naktiyok, 2005). And women with children working on a remote form of employment had lower depression (Kossek, et al., 2006). However, despite of the publications availability in this field, there have not been previous studies in opposite direction: how does telecommuting affect the desire to have more children in the family and give them more time and attention. The authors have attempted to fill this gap in the researches.

Scientists have proved that telecommuting choices were found to have a significant impact on family relations, on the one hand, and the family influence on telework, on the other hand. During removed operation, the boundaries between work and family become flexible and permeable. A survey of 509 information workers in Hong Kong (Leung & Zhang, 2017) showed that work at home penetrates the family atmosphere. As a result, working at home on the basis of telecommuting may not represent an opportunity, but rather a major challenge, causing significant problems for and limitations on both family and work life (Gadecki, et al., 2016). The last conclusion contradicts the author's study hypothesis, according to which telecommuting gives women the opportunity to spend more time with the family and children, so it can contribute to the birth rate increase.

2 Research Methods

The methodology of researching the young women attitude towards teleworking and its opportunities to promote the rise of the number of children in families provided for a sociological study. As telecommuting is prevalent only in large cities in Russia; and, secondly, the lowest birth rate of the population is observed also in cities and, therefore, the problem of increasing the birth rate is the most acute there, the survey was conducted in Yekaterinburg megalopolis in February 2018. Universities students have been interviewed, since they are entering the fertile age currently and are going to have children, and the population at this age is the lowest, including women. In addition, telecommuting is the most typical for people with a high educational level, so students of senior courses have been interviewed.

In total, 207 female students over 18 years who study in 6 universities of the city were interviewed. This number of respondents is proportional to the share of people with higher education in the working age population of Russia (21.5%). The study involved students not only from public but also private universities in order to avoid sampling errors. The method of cluster sampling was chosen, since it is the best for student groups. In one academic group there are students from different social stratum of society, with different interests, motivation and attitude to work and to life. More than one group of students (from 2 to 4) was interviewed in each university. All female students without exception were interviewed inside the cluster. The survey was conducted by the authors themselves. The sampling error at 95% confidence interval is +/- 2%. Thus, the sample can be called representative.

The authors developed an original questionnaire containing 10 evaluative questions on the merits of the studied issue (about attitude towards telecommuting, personal preferences in choosing a job, the view on the telework attractiveness for various groups of population and so on) and 5 questions about a socio-demographic nature (age, marital status, profession, etc.). In order to ensure comparability of results, earlier studies were taken into account when formulating certain questions of the questionnaire, for example, about the desired number of children. During the questionnaire development process, a pilot study was conducted to eliminate incomprehensible, two-fold questions and to refine the questionnaire. The results of the survey were recorded in a database and were processed using a computer program, which eliminates the possibility of arithmetic mistakes in the calculation process. As a result of the research, it was not only determined the answers distribution for each question, but it was also revealed the several indicators interrelations.

3 Study Results

The questions that the respondents were asked examined all levels of their needs and, in one way or another, reflected their satisfaction degree if they used remote employment. The majority of the interviewed girls are between 18 and 24 years - 89.2%, age groups from 25 to 29 and from 30-35 years were also represented in equal proportions (3.6% each).

Only 13.5% of the respondents answered positively to the question, "Did you have any work experience remotely?". Spheres of telecommuting were specified marketing and sales, design and recruiting, to wit work that was carried out through the Internet mostly. The main reasons for engaging in these activities were only three from the eight proposed options: the opportunity to earn extra money (8.1%), education (2.7%) and enjoy of working at home (2.7%).

Despite of the fact that 86.5% of respondents had not had the experience in teleworking, almost 40% of the girls received offers to work remotely. Slightly more than 50.5% of all respondents expressed a desire to work remotely, 26.1% - clearly do not want to work remotely, at home and 23.4% - could not give a definite answer to this question, which is probably due to the respondents' lack of experience because of a young age.

A significant part of the questionnaire was devoted to the priority of the work conditions when choosing a workplace. Girls were asked to evaluate 14 individual priorities and to assign a significance score from 1 (not enough important) to 5 (quite important). The following rating was formed based on the results of the respondents' answers:

1) high significance level (from 4.1 to 5.0 points) for the career growth opportunity (average score 4.5);

2) the average significance level (from 3.1 to 4.0 points) for: the ability to plan the working time independently (morning, afternoon or evening) - 3.8 points; the ability to combine work and home activities and do not waste time on the way to work - 3.6 points each; free schedule; the opportunity to devote more time to children, their development; a clear, stable work mode and the organizing and maintaining a workplace by the employer – 3.5 points each; the opportunity to work outside the home, changing the atmosphere - 3.4 points; the opportunity to communicate with colleagues and to work in a team - 3.2 points each.

3) low significance level (from 2.1 to 3.0 points): standard working schedule of five working days and two days off - 3.0 points; the opportunity not to adjust to the dress code and

other corporative requirements - 2.8 points; changeable work schedule (for example, 2 working days, then 2 days of rest) - 2.5 points.

In spite of the lack of telecommuting experience among the respondents' majority, the questionnaire suggested to presume how their quality of life and psycho-physiological condition would change while working remotely. Girls supposed that telecommuting would not affect their health (56% answers); and 64% presumed that remote employment would not affect their children and relatives' health. At the same time, 22.5% of respondents noted that remote employment can contribute to improving their health, probably assuming that it would be possible to pay more attention to their psycho-physiological condition. 35.1% of girls were sure that the health of children and relatives would improve.

The respondents' answers distributions to questions describing how leisure, free time and development prospects will change if they start use telecommuting are presented in Tab.1.

Tab. 1: Respondents' opinion about the telecommuting impact on leisure, free time and development prospects.

Question	Answer Variants	Distribution of answers,%
You will go with children to the theater, to concerts, exhibitions and other cultural events more often:	Yes	20.7
	Rather yes than no	43.3
	More likely no than yes	15.3
	No	5.4
	Everything will remain unchanged	15.3
There will be an opportunity to devote more time to the children's development and education:	Yes	27.9
	Rather yes than no	45.1
	More likely no than yes	9.0
	No	3.6
	Everything will remain unchanged	14.4
You will have more time for your personal social, cultural and spiritual life:	Yes	33.3
	Rather yes than no	43.2
	More likely no than yes	14.4
	No	1.8
	Everything will remain unchanged	7.2
You will have more time for yourself, rest and communication:	Yes	33.3
	Rather yes than no	36.0
	More likely no than yes	17.1
	No	3.6
	Everything will remain unchanged	9.9

There will be an opportunity to get an education (higher or additional):	Yes	22.5
	Rather yes than no	37.8
	More likely no than yes	13.5
	No	6.4
	Everything will remain unchanged	19.8

Source: Compiled by the authors according to the author's survey results

Respondents showed a positive impact of remote work on the free time structure and self-development for all the above issues. The expected positive impact of telecommuting on the comfort and tidiness in the houses (55.8%) and the nutrition recovery (improvement) (51.3%) were also noted.

The question was also asked about the telework impact on income level, 11.7% of respondents considered that their income will increase, 18% - assumed that there would be no changes, 10.8% predicted a decrease in income, a large part (59.5%) found difficulties to answer.

Family relations are an integral part of a happy life. When answering a question "How would your relationship with your husband/partner change", almost 29% of girls hope for their improvement; 23.4% believe that the relationship will remain stable and will not change due to their employment; 5.4% expressed concerns about the deterioration of relationships with husband/partner. It should also be noted that the majority of respondents (73.9%) are single, 19.8% live together without registering a marriage, and 6.3% are married.

55.8% of girls agreed with the statement that having children is an undesirable factor for the employer when being hired. At the same time, 48.6% of the respondents are planning to have 2 children, 16.2% - 3 children and 15.3% of the girls would like to become mothers with more than 3 children. Taking into account the Russian legislation, the interruption of work with at least 1 child will be about 3 years maximum; while teleworking allows women to avoid the labor qualification loss. 41.4% of girls believe that if they used telework, they could give birth to one more child. Also, 9.9% of respondents are ready to give birth to a child without a husband in the event that during the maternity leave they can work at home, remotely.

The question "Do you consider yourself a happy person?", the girls were asked, involves a general assessment of the moral consciousness, indicating the state of the greatest internal satisfaction, understanding and realization of its purpose: 40.5% answered yes; 39.6%

- yes rather than no; 7.2% - it is more likely than not; less than 1% gave a negative answer; 11.7% - found difficulties with answers.

In spite of the fact that telecommuting promotes the birth and children's upbringing, it corresponds to the choosing the type of employment conditions (high and medium importance noted by the respondents), allows women to devote more time to leisure, family and self-development, most of the interviewed girls (58.6%) choose the standard employment form with the employer's workplace while answering the question "What kind of employment would you prefer if you have a choice?". The given choice is caused by many factors, for example, insufficient popularization and information support of telecommuting from the state executive bodies, the inadequacy of the legislation regarding the social and labor risks of remote work, the mentality and habits of workers themselves.

Conclusion

In the conclusion of the study, the authors specified the ways and prospects for developing young women's interests to telecommuting.

Firstly, it is necessary to adjust the professional competencies forming processes for students of higher educational institutions, related with professional adaptation and employee's labor behavior. Today the basis for the students' professionally important qualities formation is the workers' conformity to the traditional social and labor relations. However, telecommuting implies a certain shift in the professionally important qualities center from a focus on teamwork and interaction with others (sociability, charisma, teamwork skills, diligence and others) to self-control, self-organization, responsibility, communication and creativity.

Secondly, it is necessary to develop the entrepreneurial activity, legal literacy and young women proactivity through information support and explanation of remotely occupied opportunities by labor and employment departments, as well as municipal employment services. Young women of childbearing age are one of disadvantaged of economically active population; employers are not willing to create social and labor relations with them. Labor activity diversification and the reorientation of standard labor relations into remote ones for the parental leave period and long-term sick-leave can possibly be the solution to this problem.

Thirdly, it is necessary to specify the rights, duties and responsibilities of participants in teleworking labor relations on the national legislative level. Remote employment entails a

number of social and labor risks inherent in both the employer and the employee due to its flexibility and mobility of its implementation. Standard social and labor relations are more clearly regulated by the labor code and a number of laws adjusting the population employment. It is necessary to expand the legislative "airbag" for all participants in remote social and labor relations at all levels of their implementation.

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