

# DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN'S CAREER PATTERN IN RELATION OF EMPLOYMENT

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## Abstract

*The development of women's career is more complicated than that of men's, as various internal and external barriers exist, for instance, the family and related duties, the role in life, employment, the surrounding environment, traditions and stereotypes that both facilitate and limit the choice of a career by women and their career growth. To understand the specifics of women's professional career, scientists seek to explain the relations of employment and careers. A career is defined as a position of employment, a sequence of roles, activities and experiences that combines the job, the career and the profession as well as the situation of being unemployed. It means that a career may develop not only upwards, but during its course women may end up in various situations and have various statuses of employment. Therefore, employment is associated with a professional career through the change of the status of employment. The research includes the research results on women's career patterns. The research aim is to examine the ways-of women's career pattern. To achieve the aim, a survey of women was conducted. In the survey, the ways of women's career pattern in Latvia were identified based on seven ways-of women's career pattern, as defined by D. Super's Theory of Career Development. The paper concludes that the distribution of the given of women's careers patterns are as follows: 38.5 % are parallel careers, 25.6 % interrupted careers, 15.4 % stable careers, 12.8 % traditional careers, 5.1 % instable careers and 2.6 % are stable housekeeper careers. The research results will contribute to the understanding of the ways of women's career pattern.*

**Key words:** *women's career development, women's career pattern, employment and career, life areas.*

## Introduction

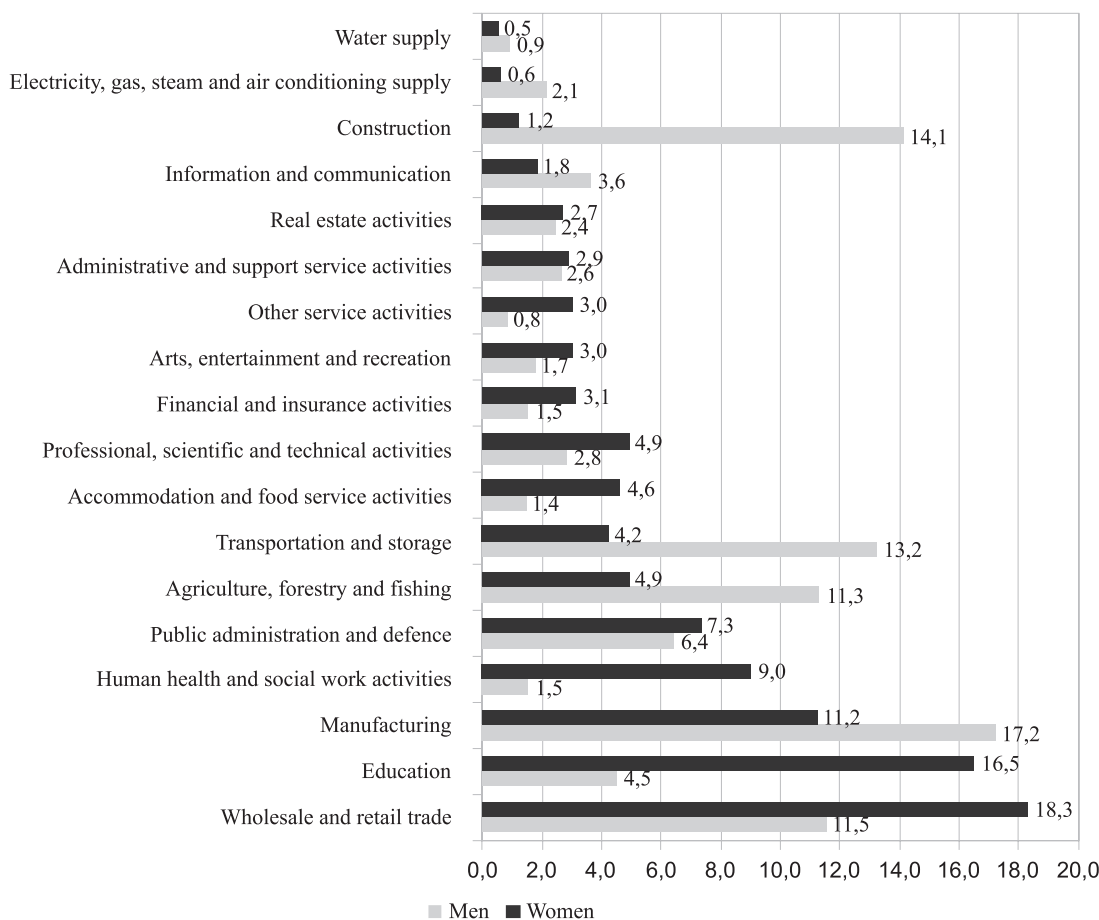
Nowadays, career plays an increasing role in any woman's life. One of the definitions of career is as follows: career is successful advancement in the job, politics, etc. (Academic term database, 2014). It is important to women to make success on the job, but equally significant for them is their wish to start a family. However, the most important thing is not to lose balance between the personal life and the job. Women have five interrelated life areas to which they dedicate a lot of time and duties. Women have a successful life if they manage to balance all these five life areas:

- a job (it is important that women do a job they like and gain financial stability);
- the family (family life is one of the most important life areas of women, that is why it is essential that the family life is arranged according to the wishes and needs of women);
- spirituality (the time and activities what women dedicate to their spiritual growth, self-improvement and self-development);

- civic engagement (the need to be part of the society – the time and energy what is dedicated to others, the surrounding environment and the state);
- leisure time (leisure time and various hobbies allow individuals to realise their interests, which cannot be realised at their job) (Karjeris jomas, 2014).

It is believed that individuals have a limited choice of professions and employment based on their gender, ethnic and social affiliation. As regards gender, women seemingly have no limited opportunities to choose and work in a freely chosen profession if this profession is not historically been assumed to be a profession for men or a position that may be taken by an individual of a certain stereotype (Rācene, 2011, 2012).

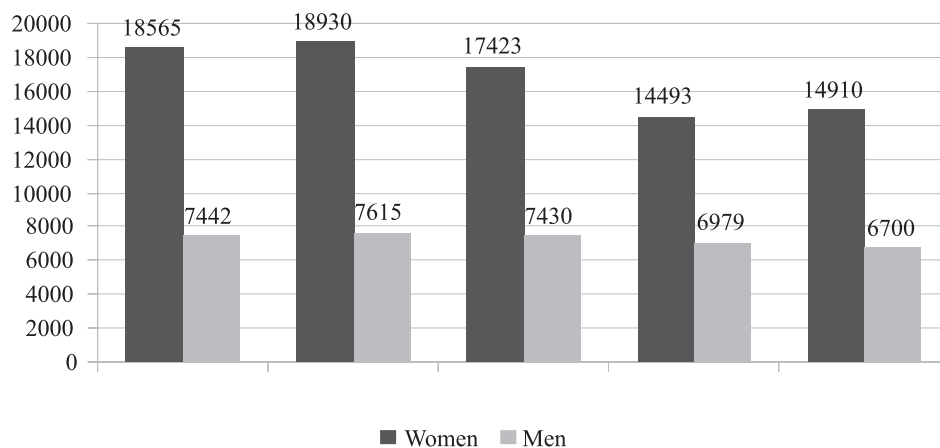
As regards equal rights to men and women, Article 23 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union provides that equal rights to men and women have to be ensured in all the areas, including employment, jobs and wages (Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, 2010). Further, in this research, the situation regarding equality problems between men and women in Latvia is analysed. According to data of the Central Statistical Bureau (CSB) for 2013 (Figure 1), there are industries in Latvia in which women are represented in considerably greater numbers than men. Three industries in which women outnumber men are: trade, wholesale retail trade, education and human health and social work activities.



Source: www.csb.gov.lv data, author's construction

**Figure 1: Percentage distribution of employees by the ways of economic activity and by gender in Latvia in 2013.**

In general, in Latvia, women obtain higher education in relatively greater numbers than men. According to CSB data, in the period 2009-2013, on average, 1.4 times more women than men earned a university or college degrees (Figure 2).



Source: [www.csb.gov.lv](http://www.csb.gov.lv) data, author's construction

**Figure 2: Division of graduates of universities and colleges by gender in the period 2009-2013 in Latvia.**

Education is one of the preconditions for success within the labour market. The largest number of the unemployed is formed by people with professional education, general secondary education and primary or unfinished primary education. The number of the unemployed with higher education, in turn, already for several years fluctuates around the level of 12 % of the total number of the unemployed. It testifies to the fact that people with higher education are better able to orient in the labour market and their level of mobility is higher (Stalidzane, Dislere, 2012). The workforce in the labour market is of comparatively low level of qualification, but there is a demand for highly qualified people. All workplaces demand young, educated people with knowledge of foreign languages, computer literate, able to work unlimited hours and with practical work experience (Operational Programme „Human Resources and Employment”, 2011).

Some of the most successful conditions of shaping careers are: vocational training, rising up a qualification in professional training and acquiring higher education.

The aim of the recent research is to examine the potential ways of women's career patterns.

The research questions are: what are the potential ways of women's career patterns and what are the relations with employment. Which are the most important life roles for women and how they connect with a successful career?

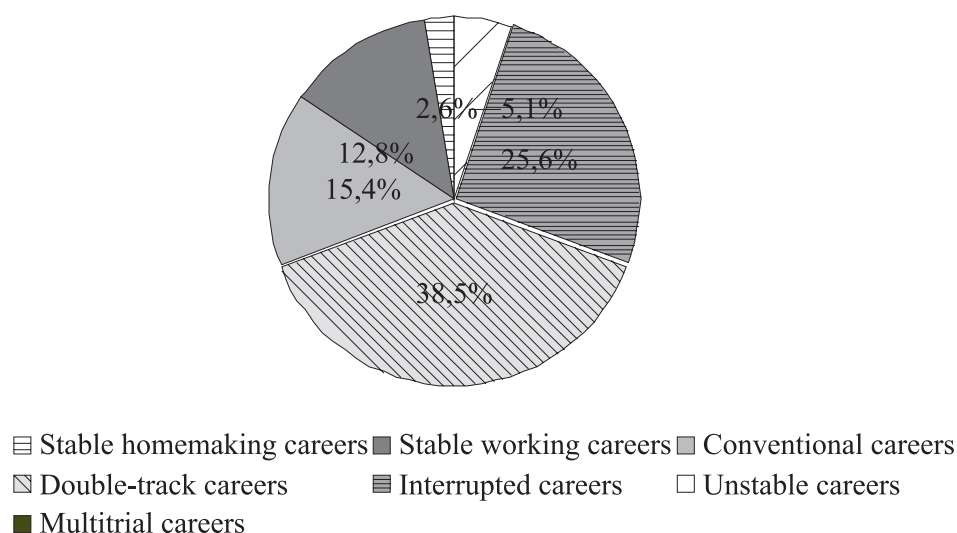
## Methodology of Research

Analysis of women's life areas and how they connect with a successful career and statistical analysis of ways of women's career patterns as well as solution of these issues is the work of the author already for several years at the Institute of Education and Home Economics of the Latvia University of Agriculture. The theories of career development of D. Super, R. S. Sharf and others were assessed. To achieve the aim and execute the tasks of the research a descriptive statistical analysis method was used. To identify the factors determining successful women's career a sociological research method – a questionnaire survey was realized. The survey was conducted at the Jelgava Regional Department of the State Employment Agency and Zemgale Regional Department of the State Police and through social networks during 2012-2013 to get insight into the patterns of women's careers. This survey was a pilot study for the further research in doctoral studies. The present research includes the findings of a survey of women regarding the patterns of women's career. 39 women were involved in the survey. According to the survey, women aged 29-58 participated in the survey; the amplitude of age was 29 years. Since the women working in the State Police and other women who use the social network portal [www.draugiem.lv](http://www.draugiem.lv) as well as the author's acquaintances were selected

as respondents, the percentage distribution of the respondents by education was as follows: higher education – 48.7%, a master's degree – 25.6% and secondary education – 25.6%. Of the respondents, on one had primary or even lower education, which may not be usually observed if conducting a survey of unemployed individuals. It indicates that education enables individuals to find and retain their job. The respondents were asked to answer the question- to which pattern of women's careers based on D. Super theory corresponds your career?

## Results of Research

On the result of the author research the distribution of the women's career pattern, revealed by the survey, was as follows: 38.5 % were double-track careers (women combine their paid work with work in their household), 25.6 % interrupted careers (women return to paid employment after bringing up their children), 15.4 % stable working careers (women do paid work throughout their entire life), 12.8 % conventional careers (women choose traditional women's jobs right after finishing their school, usually they are teachers, medical nurses, secretaries; then they work until get married and afterwards are fully employed in their household), 5.1 % unstable careers (this career pattern is characterised by irregular engagement in employment), 2.6 % stable homemaking careers (it is characterised by a woman's early marriage and her dedication to homemaking) and 0% multitrial careers – no respondents had such a career (Figure 3).



**Figure 3: Percentage distribution of the patterns of women's careers in Latvia.**

Looking at the results of the study it can be concluded that 38% of respondents mentioned that there is a parallel career in which women combine paid work with domestic work. It is due to the relatively low-income for women work in our country, with which the level it is impossible to provide the payment of household maintenance and organization services. Thus, women working parallel regular work have to ensure the successful functioning of the household.

However, in order to function successfully, it is necessary to find the ways of healthy balanced life. Women have five interrelated life areas to which they dedicate a lot of their time, energy, duties and attention. The key to a successful life is the ability to balance these five life areas: job, family, spirituality, civic engagement and leisure time. It is of great importance for women to balance these five life areas. As regards the importance of life areas, of the respondents, 30.8% rated job at 10, the highest rating, 74.4% – family, 12.8 % – spirituality, 2.6 % – civic engagement and 23.1% – leisure time (Table 1).

**Table 1. Life areas from the respondents' perspective (replies expressed as a percentage in each of life roles, ratings in 10 points).**

| Points | Life areas |        |              |                  |              |
|--------|------------|--------|--------------|------------------|--------------|
|        | Job        | Family | Spirituality | Civic engagement | Leisure time |
| 1      | 0          | 0      | 0            | 0                | 0            |
| 2      | 0          | 0      | 2.5          | 1.28             | 0            |
| 3      | 0          | 0      | 0            | 2.5              | 0            |
| 4      | 0          | 0      | 2.5          | 7.7              | 0            |
| 5      | 5.1        | 2.5    | 2.6          | 20.5             | 17.9         |
| 6      | 2.5        | 0      | 5.1          | 7.7              | 0            |
| 7      | 7.7        | 0      | 10.3         | 15.4             | 15.4         |
| 8      | 23.1       | 7.7    | 30.8         | 25.7             | 20.5         |
| 9      | 30.8       | 15.4   | 33.4         | 5.1              | 23.1         |
| 10     | 30.8       | 74.4   | 12.8         | 2.6              | 23.1         |

For women, the most important life area is their family, with which all the other life areas are gradually associated.

After getting familiarised with the experiences and publications of foreign and national scientists, the author concludes that the choice of a career by a woman is affected by the environment in which the woman lives; it is the family in which she has grown up, her own family, opportunities for education to improve and develop herself, personal traits, personal motivations and the planned family and life model. A large role is played by career support, beginning with relatives – the husband, children and parents – and ending with the job, colleagues and local and national government support.

## Discussion

It is good that individuals think of their career not only as a job, but also regard it as their own life. Middle-aged people have more realistic expectations than adolescent and on the first plan raises external job motivation factors – salary and material stimulation. For women more important than earnings is the relationship between the work colleagues and working conditions. However, men focuses on work, career growth and higher profits, it unchanged for life. Those women who have devoted themselves to the family at a young age, more attention devote to the professional purposes at middle age, and vice versa, those who had devoted more attention to career and work when they were youngsters, wants to devote more attention to the family at middle age. Gender roles factor plays an important role of women in terms of employment. Women often prefer such professions that allow more time to devote to family (part-time work day, less effort and time consumption, and thus have limited career opportunities and receive lower salary), or traditionally “feminine” occupations as pedagogy or care (Miķelsone, Strods, Oļehnoviča, 2008).

Individuals have five interrelated life areas to which they dedicate a lot of their time, energy, duties and attention. The key to a successful life is the ability to balance these five life areas (job, family, spirituality, civic engagement and leisure time). Individuals do not have to dedicate equal amounts of time to them. And it is very important for women to balance these five life areas. Discussions arise in the community of scientists regarding whether a special women's career theory or a comprehensive theory for all social groups is necessary. Based on the career development theories D. Super (1957) suggests seven patterns of women's careers. But this discussion has led to five approaches to women's career theories.

The first approach – creation of a special theory for women's careers. Its creation is based on different needs, prospects, choices and priorities of women. Such factors as marriage, satisfaction, family finances, social affiliation, parents' education and occupation, values, social mobility and

choice of friends are different to women than men. In some fields, women are the majority: teachers, nurses and secretaries, which may be explained by women's efforts to successfully get married and thereby retain their social status (Psathas, 1968). D. Zytowsky (1969) emphasises the significance of marriage, maternal role and home life in women's career. However, no one can deny that after the Second World War a "quiet revolution" of women took place in the labour market, and the role of career in women's life increased. D. Zytowsky classifies women's employment factors into three groups:

- age of starting employment;
- time spent in the job;
- extent of engagement in the job.

The second approach – adaptation of the present theories. D. Super (Super, 1957; Sharf, 2006; Athanasou, Esbroeck, 2008) mentions seven patterns of women's careers:

- stable homemaking career. It is characterised by a woman's early marriage and her dedication to homemaking;
- conventional career. Women choose traditional women's jobs right after finishing their school, usually they are teachers, medical nurses, secretaries; then they work until get married and afterwards are fully employed in their household;
- stable working career. Women do paid work throughout their entire life;
- double-track career. Women combine their paid work with work in their household;
- interrupted career. Women return to paid employment after bringing up their children;
- unstable career. This career pattern is characterised by irregular engagement in employment.
- multitrial career. It indicates the changing nature of working life.

D. Super also describes the stages of decision-making and the environment of life which, although not fully fit for women's career, explain the effect of these factors.

J. Holland, describing six types of people and their corresponding occupation, says that it does not apply to well-educated white race middle-class women. L. Fitzgerald and L. Weitzman (Fitzgerald, Weitzman, 1992) point that the choice of a career by a woman depends not only on her interests, but also her role in the family and her financial situation.

The third approach – creation of comprehensive theories on careers of women and men. L. Gottfredson in 1981 and H. Astin in 1984 developed theories on the careers of both genders. They examined the effects of the social environment and an individual's traits on career decisions. H. Astin believes that the work motivation of both genders is equal; yet, women's early socialisation experience and opportunity patterns in making career decisions differ. For example, progress in reproductive technologies would change the expectations of women's career roles. H. Astin combines motivations, expectations of career roles, socialisation of gender roles and opportunity patterns. However, L. Gottfredson (1981) recognises that the formation of a personality pattern is influenced by gender, social group, intelligence, interests, values and their interaction with one's notion of employment. She notes that children of both genders already at the age of 6-8 years are able to make a choice influenced by the existing reality. After generalising this idea, one can conclude that individuals, influenced by their interests, profession's prestige and understanding of gender roles, limit their choices of professions and balance the choices between what is desired and what is real. By limiting the choices, individuals, first, consider reality and sacrifice their interests; then they assess the profession's prestige and how it is appropriate for their gender role.

The fourth approach is associated with the examination of specific, individually different women's choices of careers. H. Farmer (1985) proposes a theory that associates the factors of origin (gender, race, social stratum, school location and age) with a personality's psychological factors (self-esteem, values, attitude to home and perception of achievements) and social factors (public attitude to women's work, support of teachers and parents). For example, in the 1980-90s women turned to a career because of social support to them.

The fifth approach – formation of social-cognitive models appropriate for women's careers. Its authors, J. Hackett and N. Betz (1981) tries to explain the influence of socialisation on career develop-

ment by using the self-efficacy sources defined by A. Bandura (1977): enactive mastery experience, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion and physiological and affective states (with efforts as the highest stage, self-confidence as the lowest). While examining the professional self-confidence of men and women, differences were observed: men felt confident both in conventional men's and in conventional women's professions, whereas women were more confident in conventional women's professions and less confident in conventional men's professions. In 1994, R. Lent and J. Hackett (1994) proposed their social cognitive career theory.

The study results demonstrate that D. Supera described women's career patterns exist and operate nowadays also.

The author plans to explore in the future how the principle of gender adequacy affects to women's career development issues. The future directions of the research includes to develop and scientifically substantiated professional crisis management model in accordance with the design and appropriate methodology of professional career counselling for women in crisis situations. It is planned to explore what criteria and indicators for determining professional crisis for women are needed?

## Conclusions

Women have five interrelated life areas to which they dedicate a lot of their time, energy, duties and attention; they are: job, family, spirituality, civic engagement and leisure time. For women, it is important to identify their most important life areas and to balance their activities in each life area. As regards the importance of life areas, of the respondents the highest rating was devoted to the family issues, then related to the job and leisure time activities. If a woman will be able to balance a healthy lifestyle throughout their life roles, then her career will be successful. For women, the most important life area is their family, with which all the other life areas are gradually associated.

The potential ways of women's career patterns were similar to the seven patterns defined by D. Super's theory of career development. The distribution of the patterns revealed by the survey shows that the most popular nowadays is double-track careers, then interrupted careers, then stable working careers and the other ways. If women have the possibility to work in double-track careers or interrupted careers or part-time work load, then it is possible better balance in their lives than to be unemployed for quite a long time.

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