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CAREER AND FAMILY PLANS OF HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENTS AS RISK FACTORS FOR THEIR FUTURE EMPLOYERS' HR MANAGEMENT

Анотація. У статті представлено результати пілотного дослідження кар'єрних та сімейних планів студентів вищих навчальних закладів, проведеного серед студентів, які вивчають соціальні науки в дослідницькому університеті Східної Угорщини. Відповідно до одного типу моделей кар'єри, а саме самостійної, багатогранної концепції кар'єри, організації повинні адаптуватися до власної інтерпретації кар'єри, цінностей і ставлень співробітників. Згідно моделі кар'єри «Калейдоскоп», люди сьогодні адаптують свою кар'єру до етапів свого життя. У зв'язку з цим ця стаття стосується сімейних планів студентів, окрім їхніх кар'єрних планів. Новизна дослідження полягає в тому, що воно розглядає плани угорських студентів, які навчаються в певній галузі (соціальні науки), і паралельно аналізує їхні кар'єрні та сімейні плани. Дослідження сфокусоване на таких напрямках: що означають для студентів сім'я та кар'єра, що на них впливає; чи сім'я чи кар'єра важливіші для студентів; як студенти виділяють час на них і якою мірою вони можуть їх поєднувати. Методи дослідження включають описову статистику, двофакторний аналіз і пошуковий факторний аналіз. Результати показують, що кар'єрні цілі часто передували сімейним цілям і, відповідно до традиційних гендерних ролей, кар'єра була трохи важливішою для студентів, ніж для студенток. Відповідно до факторного аналізу, студенти визнали найважливішим відповідати власним очікуванням. Крім того, багато студентів, особливо дівчат, трактували кар'єру як форму самореалізації. Ці результати відповідають сучасним моделям кар'єри (концепція самокерованої багатогранної кар'єри та модель кар'єри «Калейдоскоп»). Важливим наслідком дослідження для потенційних роботодавців є необхідність адаптувати свої кадрові стратегії до сімейних і кар'єрних планів молодих людей. Дослідження також підкреслює, що кар'єрні цілі студентів виділяються вже під час навчання, тому роботодавці повинні посилити співпрацю з університетами, щоб підтримати студентів у набутті професійного досвіду під час навчання, щоб допомогти їм досягти кар'єрних цілей.

Ключові слова: соціальна сфера, студенти вищих навчальних закладів, кар'єрні плани, сімейні плани, пілотне дослідження, Східна Угорщина

JEL Classification: J24



Absztrakt. A tanulmány a felsőoktatási hallgatók karrier- és családterveivel foglalkozik egy kelet-magyarországi kutatóegyetemen társadalomtudományokat tanuló hallgatók körében végzett feltáró kérdőíves kutatás alapján. A karriermodellek egyik típusa, az önvezérelt, úgynevezett proteín karrierkonceptió szerint a szervezeteknek a munkavállalók saját karrierértelmezéséhez, értékeihez és attitűdjeihez kell igazodniuk, továbbá az ún. kaleidoszkóp-modell szerint napjainkban az egyének a karrierjüket az életszakaszaikhoz igazítják. Mindez indokolja, hogy a diákok karriertervei mellett a diákok családterveit is elemezzük. A kutatás újdonsága, hogy egy adott területen (társadalomtudományok) tanulók karrier- és családterveit vizsgálja Magyarországon, és e két témát párhuzamosan elemezi. A dolgozat kutatási kérdései, hogy mit jelent a diákok számára a család és a karrier, mi befolyásolja őket, mi a fontosabb a diákoknak a család vagy a karrier, hogyan időzítik ezeket és mennyiben tartják összehangolhatónak. A vizsgálati módszerek leíró statisztikák, kétváltozós elemzések és feltáró faktorelemzés voltak. Az eredmények szerint a karrierépítési célok sok esetben megelőzték a családalapítási célokat, illetve a hagyományos nemi szerepeknek megfelelően az itt tanuló férfiak számára valamivel fontosabb volt a karrier, mint a nőknek. A faktorelemzés rámutatott arra, hogy a legfontosabb a diákoknak a saját elvárásaiknak való megfelelés, illetve elsősorban a női hallgatók körében, többen a karriert egyfajta önmegvalósításként, önkiteljesedésként értelmezték. Ezek az eredmények összhangban vannak a modern karriermodellekkel (különösen az önvezérelt, proteín karrier koncepcióval és a Kaleidoszkóp modellel). A kutatás fontos tanulsága a leendő munkaadók számára, hogy HR-stratégiájukat a fiatalok család- és karrierterveire kell igazítaniuk. A kutatás arra is rávilágít, hogy a hallgatók karriercéljai már az egyetem alatt hangsúlyosak, így a munkáltatóknak az egyetemekkel szorosan együttműködve támogatniuk kell a diákokat, hogy már a tanulás mellett munkatapasztalatokat szerezhessenek, mely segíti őket abban, hogy elérjék karriercéljaikat.

Kulcsszavak: szociális terület, felsőoktatási hallgatók, karriertervek, családtervek, feltáró pilot-kutatás, Kelet-Magyarország

Abstract. This paper deals with higher education students' career and family plans based on a quantitative pilot research conducted among students studying social sciences at a research university in Eastern Hungary. According to one type of career models, namely the self-directed, protean career concept, organisations should adapt to employees' own career interpretation, values, and attitudes, furthermore, according to the Kaleidoscope Career Model, individuals nowadays adapt their careers to their life stages. Due to this, this paper deals with students' family plans besides their career plans. The novelty of the research is that it examines the plans of Hungarian students studying in a specific field (social sciences) and analyzes their career and family plans in parallel. The research investigates what family and career mean to students, what influences these, whether family or career is more important to students, how students time these, and to what extent they consider these to be compatible. Research methods include descriptive statistics, bivariate analysis, and exploratory factor analysis. The results show that career goals often preceded family goals and, in accordance with traditional gender roles, career was slightly more important for male students than for female students. According to the factor analysis, students found it the most important to meet their own expectations. Furthermore, many students, especially females, interpreted career as a form of self-fulfilment. These results are in line with modern career models (the self-directed, protean career concept and the Kaleidoscope Career Model). An important implication of the research for prospective employers is the need to adapt their HR strategies to young people's family and career plans. The research also highlights that students' career goals are already emphasised during the studies, so employers should strengthen cooperation with universities to support students in acquiring professional experience during their studies to help them achieve their career goals.

Keywords: social sciences, higher education students, career plans, family plans, exploratory pilot study, Eastern Hungary

Introduction. This study examines higher education students' career and family plans based on a pilot study in Eastern Hungary. Nowadays, novel career models have emerged, focussing on protean self-directed careers [19], in addition to the traditional vertical advancement within an organisation [2]. Consequently, organisations need to adapt to individual goals and attitudes [39]. Prospective employers should consider higher education students' family and career plans, which could constitute a risk factor. In addition, it is important to highlight that students' employability is increasingly important for universities [43]. Students can build their careers during their university years, for example through internships or paid and voluntary work alongside their studies, which should be supported by higher education institutions. The novelty of this research is that it examines family and career plans of students in parallel, and the target group is Hungarian higher education students studying social sciences (sociology or social work), which is considered a female field with lower earnings compared to the private sector [13]. Therefore, it may provide insight to examine the career and family plans of students in this specific field.

The choice of topic is justified by the fact that there is only few domestic (Hungarian) research on the career interpretation and career plans of higher education students, even though this is an important topic from an HR point of view, as well. Although several researchers deal with the family plans of Hungarian higher education students in the scientific literature, e.g. with the relative importance, timing, and coordination of family and career, however, there is a little attention on HR consequences of these plans. The topicality of the research is also given by the change in the concept of career, the increasing career awareness of students, and the postponement of starting a family, which will be discussed later on.

In this exploratory analysis, the research questions are the following: What do family and career mean to students? What could influence these? Is family or career more important to students? How do they time career and family? To what extent do they consider these to be compatible? What differences are observed in the responses by students' gender and marital status?

In the theoretical section of the study, the literature on career definitions, career models, young people's career awareness, career interpretations, and finally the factors which influence a successful career will be explored. The second section examines the literature on young people's plans regarding having a relationship and children, the importance and timing of career and family, and their reconciliation. The data for the empirical research are drawn from a questionnaire-based pilot study among students (N=90) of social science programmes at a research university in Eastern Hungary. The analytical methods include descriptive statistics, exploratory factor analysis, and bivariate analyses (cross-tabulations and analysis of variance). After presenting the results, the discussion and conclusions follow, as well as the limitations of the research and possible further research directions.

Literature review. *Young People's Career Plans.* According to the Hungarian Dictionary of Foreign Words and Phrases, career means "successful promotion,



advancement”, and according to the Dictionary of the Hungarian Language, it means “occupation, vocation, and path”. Career is a concept which refers to a process. In sociology, it stands for an objective determination linked to one’s position in the social division of labour [4].

According to the traditional professional definition, a career is defined as advancement in the labour market, either within an employer or by changing jobs [2]. However, nowadays a career is not limited to simply moving up the ranks within an organisation, but can also be understood horizontally, by changing jobs, which could increase employees’ satisfaction and motivation [39].

One group of career models focusses on career development, which is linked to age groups. The target population of this research, namely university students, are in the stages of career preparation, exploration, and discovery [41]. Careers include events prior to career choice. Three decisions are crucial for one’s career path: occupational choice, job choice, and career choice [4].

According to another group of career models, careers today are increasingly self-directed (“protean careers”) and are adapted to individuals’ values and subjective career interpretation [19]. A similar idea is behind the “kaleidoscope career”, whereby individuals, rather than employers, decide on their own careers and adapt their careers to changes in their life path and to their own aspirations [40]. Careers therefore imply the need to align organisational goals with individuals’ needs, values, attitudes, and lifestyles. It is important to match people’s job to their personality traits and competences [34].

Recently, in addition to the traditionally static and linear career model, a change-oriented and dynamic novel (non-linear) model has emerged [6]. Career paths may include inactive or unsuccessful stages, career breaks, and not just vertical upward progression but also horizontal movements. While men tend to have relatively traditional linear careers, women may follow non-linear career paths due to having children, and there may also be differences in career types between the public and private sectors [4].

Higher education students’ career understanding is not yet fully developed due to their lack of experience, although they may already have insight about the world of work through paid and voluntary work, internships, and dual training. Tuckman (1974) considers those students as career conscious who enter higher education based on the evaluation of the career prospects and earnings they could expect from their degree. This view is underpinned by human capital theory [27, 3, 35], which regards higher education as an investment that increases individuals’ productivity, which may produce returns in subsequent higher earnings and positions. Fényes, Mohácsi and Pallay [16] and Fényes, Mohácsi, and Pusztai [17] showed that certain groups of students were career-oriented when entering higher education, and that acquiring work experience, useful contacts, and labour market knowledge and skills were important motivating factors for paid and voluntary employment as those could pay off in employment after graduation.

According to a survey conducted in 2012 by the Szonda Ipsos polling company [38], which interviewed young people aged 15–25 in Hungary (with a representative

sample of 500 people, through personal visits), half of young people did not have career plans, preferring to live their lives spontaneously. However, young people with higher education and women were disproportionately concerned about the future and willing to make efforts to succeed in their careers. Young people understood the definition of career as successful progression in the world of work with a high salary, but those with high educational attainment also mentioned greater social recognition and prestige as well as increased job satisfaction. The financial aspect of careers was seen as more important by men than women, while the significance of job satisfaction was more pronounced among women.

Karcsics E. [22], examining young people only in higher education, found that students identified careers with elevated appreciation and recognition at work, advancement in position, self-fulfilment, and financial security. In addition, a tendency was observed to view careers as a source of social contacts or a factor demanding sacrifice at the expense of family.

Among the factors which influence successful careers, Wolff and Moser [48] highlight the role of social resources, and more specifically, Granovetter [18] argues that weak ties (distant acquaintances who may be different from one's close social group) rather than strong ties are helpful, for example, in getting better jobs. Models describing objective success in management careers show the influence of several factors, such as demographic variables, human capital resources, motivation, psychological traits, and organisational factors [20]. In the study by Karcsics E. [22], the factors influencing career success in higher education students' view included connections and relationships, followed by knowledge and human capital. In the above-mentioned 2012 survey by Szonda Ipsos, which was not limited to higher education students, young people emphasised individual effort, skills, and motivation as the main factors influencing careers but also mentioned the role of social networks and family background [38].

Young People's Family Plans. Before the fall of communism, young people's family plans were influenced primarily by financial considerations and parents' encouraging attitude towards marriage [36]. Nowadays, in accordance with international trends, family forms are increasingly diverse, with more people cohabiting, remaining single, and having children without getting married. Despite this, the family concept prevalent in the Hungarian adult population is still rather traditional [32, 36]. However, it is also observed that in recent years young people's propensity to marry has declined, mainly due to the prolongation of studies (e.g. the expansion of higher education). Higher educational attainment postpones family formation and the plans to start a family, while also supporting more ambitious career plans [11, 33]. Studies in Hungary show that although young people are family-oriented, they marry later and in smaller proportions than planned, and have fewer children than planned [21, 10, 11, 26]. In other Central and Eastern European countries, young people are also increasingly reluctant to commit and prefer cohabitation without marriage and children [29, 47].

Family plans among university students are generally characterised by a two-child family model, with a larger share of women planning to have more children and to



marry than men [5, 11]. However, in terms of timing, while some studies from Hungary show that women want to start a family earlier than men [26], international research does not confirm this [23]. Some researchers argue that women's greater financial security in modern societies is associated with postponed family formation plans [45].

Research shows that, in general, family is more important for university students than career, but a 2004 survey of female medical students found that they planned to time these together [13]. However, university students' priorities for starting a family and planning a career are changing, with more of them wishing to start their career after graduation first, so starting a family is postponed not only during the studies but also for career building, especially among young graduates [28].

Reconciling family and career has been more difficult for women than men [1], but with the rise of modern male and father roles and fathers' greater participation at home, it can also be a problem for men [42, 17]. Women's disadvantages in the labour market are partly due to difficulties with this reconciliation [24, 30, 31, 7, 8]. However, findings also show that women's earnings in Eastern Europe are much lower than men's even before having children, in contrast to Western countries, where the difference only becomes significant after having children [25].

Goals and research questions. The goal of this research is to investigate higher education students' career and family plans in a frame of a pilot study, conducted among social sciences students at a research university located in Eastern Hungary. The research questions and the questionnaire was formulated based on the previous findings and theories. The research seeks answers to the following questions: What is currently important for students and what are their plans immediately after graduation? What do career and family mean to them? What factors could influence these? What are students' views on balancing career and family life? How do they time their career and family life? What differences can be observed by students' gender and marital status?

Research Methodology. In this research a pilot study among social sciences students at Hungary's second largest university was conducted in 2022. In the comprehensive survey, the paper-based questionnaire was filled by students present in a class for each cohort and programme (N=90). The completion rate was about 60% of all students in each cohort. Data were processed using the SPSS software package. The applied methods included contingency tables, analysis of variance, and exploratory factor analysis. The students' family and career plans are analysed mainly based on demographic indicators as in the job search these characteristics are more obvious to prospective employers, who do not have information on, for example, students' social background. As the sample is relatively homogeneous by age, the differences by gender and marital status was only examined. Marital status is a bivariate variable with 76.4% of the sample single or unmarried and 23.6% cohabiting or married. As for gender, 21.1% of the sample is male and 78.9% female, showing the "feminine" nature of social sciences.

Results. In the first block, it is examined what was currently important to students, with statements including items on family and career plans. The 11 statements listed

were rated by students on a 1–5-point Likert scale. The mean for each is presented in descending order in Table 1.

Table 1
What is currently important to students, in order of importance (1–5 Likert scale, mean and standard deviation) (N=90)

The important thing for me now is to:	Mean	Std. deviation
Live up to my own expectations.	4.67	0.52
Get my degree.	4.61	0.63
Build professional relationships.	3.93	0.92
Create the financial conditions for my future family life.	3.91	1.09
Build my career.	3.68	1.08
Have fun at university.	3.67	1.11
Be with my friends.	3.53	1.04
Create the emotional conditions for my future family life.	3.51	1.31
Work while studying.	2.72	1.41
Be involved in the university community.	2.61	1.12
Live up to my parents' expectations.	2.37	1.16

Source: Authors' data collection, 2022.

The results showed that it was a relatively unimportant goal for students to work while studying, participate in university life, and meet their parents' expectations. The most important, in contrast, was to meet their own expectations (with the highest mean and smallest standard deviation). It was also important to obtain a degree, build professional contacts, and create the financial conditions for their future family life, followed by career development. This suggests that the financial conditions for family life and career development are among the important goals, while creating an emotional life for the family is slightly less crucial.

A significant difference by gender was found for only one statement. Working while studying was a moderately important goal for women studying social sciences, while for men it was not an important goal. Significance of t-test: 0.019; mean: 2.9 for women and 2.05 for men on a 1–5 scale. This is an interesting result because previous research in the region found no gender differences in paid employment [14]. However, the cross-sectional data show that only 28% of women studying social sciences did not work alongside their studies, which was 68% for men. The significance of the chi-squared test is greater than 0.05 ($p=0.06$), but the adjusted residuals are above 2 in the cell for men who did not work. Importantly, 82% of those in employment did unrelated work to their studies, which did not differ significantly by gender.

However, according to expectations, it was significantly more important for single (unmarried) students to be with friends and participate in the university community. Significance of t-test for the statement on being with friends: 0.039; mean: 3.66 for singles and 3.14 for married or cohabiting students. Significance for the statement on involvement in the university community: 0.021; mean: 2.76 for singles and 2.14 for married or cohabiting students. For those already married or cohabiting, it was more important during their university years to establish the emotional and financial security of their future (or current) family. Significance of t-test for the statement on providing



emotional security for the family: 0.016; mean: 3.32 for singles and 4.1 for married or cohabiting students. Significance of t-test for the statement on providing financial security for the family: 0.045; mean: 3.78 for singles and 4.32 for married or cohabiting students.

An exploratory factor analysis was also conducted using the 11 statements, Maximum likelihood method, varimax rotation, 5 iterations. The variance explained by the four factors was 54.7%, with communality invariably above 0.25. The variable on getting a degree was omitted because its communality was below 0.25, which revealed four factors (see Table 2 for factor scores).

Table 2
Results of the exploratory factor analysis, based on the items about what is currently important to students (factor scores, highlighted above 0.5)

The important thing for me now is to:	University-life-centred factor	Family-life-centred factor	Career-building factor	Paid-employment-centred factor
Have fun at university.	0.706	-0.104	-0.084	-0.071
Live up to my parents' expectations.	0.385	0.034	-0.291	-0.154
Be with my friends.	0.614	0.137	0.161	0.238
Be involved in the university community.	0.660	-0.054	0.198	-0.131
Create the emotional conditions for my future family life.	0.090	0.675	0.035	0.034
Create the financial conditions for my future family life.	-0.169	0.982	0.081	-0.010
Live up to my own expectations.	0.106	.0017	0.605	0.134
Build my career.	0.029	0.014	0.554	0.246
Build professional relationships.	-0.030	0.120	0.723	-0.169
Work while studying.	-0.111	0.027	0.156	0.943

Source: Authors' data collection, 2022.

Meeting parents' expectations had the highest weight for the first factor, but it still did not reach 0.5. Table 1 also shows that this aspect was the least important for students.

Consistent with the item-by-item analysis, the paid-work-centred factor is significantly above average for women and below average for men, (significance of t-test: 0.018) and the family-centred factor is above average for already married or cohabiting students and below average for single students (significance of t-test: 0.013). The exploratory factor analysis shows that the family's financial and emotional life comprises one indicator, and that career goals are linked to building professional relationships and meeting students' own expectations, which may be an important consideration for prospective employers.

In the following question block, students were asked about their plans after graduation, which showed no differences by gender and marital status. Most social sciences students (80%) plan to work in their profession after graduation and only one-third plan to start a family at the same time. Over half of the students plan to learn a language, even though an intermediate language certificate was a prerequisite for a

bachelor's degree at the time of this pilot-study. A fifth of students plan to study a language abroad and just over a tenth plan to work abroad after graduation.

At the end of the questionnaire, students were asked how confident they were that they would find a job related to their current studies, with a mean of five on a seven-point scale, corresponding to the "possible" answer. As for the distribution, in accordance with the results above, only 20% marked "possibly not" or "certainly not", while 20% were certain about finding a job in this profession, 16% were unsure, and 44% said it was "possible" or "likely". The above distribution did not differ significantly by gender and marital status.

The meaning of career for students and the factors influencing it. In the following, it will be examined what students think career is and what influences careers. The open-ended question (what does career mean?) was manually coded, with livelihood, work, and money as the most common answers (31 students), followed by professional development and path (24 students). Self-actualisation, self-fulfilment, and connection to lifestyle were mentioned by 10 students. Traditional vertical advancement was considered as a primary element of careers by only 5 respondents. Another 5 mentioned helping others and working in accordance with one's values, which may be related to the nature of social sciences. Prestige and recognition, which could compensate for potentially lower salaries among the highly educated, was mentioned by only 3. A further 3 students mentioned that personal life might also become a career. The results show that slightly more male students considered traditional vertical advancement important, and slightly more women mentioned self-fulfilment and self-actualisation, but both sexes considered career as a source of livelihood in similar proportions.

Table 3 presents the closed-ended questions on careers in descending order of importance.

Table 3

What is important to students about careers, in order of importance (1–5 Likert scale, mean and standard deviation) (N=90)

Careers:	Mean	Std. deviation
Provide professional recognition.	4.19	0.76
Provide material well-being.	4.12	0.85
Come with sacrifices in one's personal life, which one must make.	3.84	0.92
Are the only way to achieve happiness.	1.81	1
Are more important than family.	1.59	0.78

Source: Authors' data collection, 2022.

According to the data, students agreed the most that careers involved professional recognition, but almost as important was the financial aspect of careers, providing livelihood and well-being. This is consistent with the fact that financial recognition in social sciences is somewhat lower than professional esteem. In the open-ended questions, however, only 3 of the 90 students considered prestige as a priority, while 31 defined careers as a means of livelihood and financial security.



Students were less likely to agree that careers came with sacrifices in their personal lives. Finally, students tended to disagree that a career was the only way to be happy or that career was more important than family. The final question of the questionnaire asked students whether they would rather give up family or career, and in line with the above, 85% of students chose to give up their career and only 15% chose family, with no difference by gender or marital status.

Returning to the statements in Table 3, there were no significant differences by students' marital status, but significant differences were found by gender. The statement that careers provide professional recognition was slightly more important for women than men. Significance of t-test: 0.05; mean: 4.27 for women and 3.89 for men on a 1–5 scale.

This may suggest women's greater awareness of the higher professional acknowledgement in social sciences compared to the financial recognition. Men, in contrast, were more likely to agree that careers involved sacrifices in their personal lives which must be made, (significance of t-test: 0.011; mean: 3.72 for women and 4.32 for men) corresponding to traditional gender roles. Finally, students tended to disagree with the statement that a career was the only way to be happy, but men still had a slightly higher average than women, (significance of t-test: 0.05; mean: 1.7 for women and 2.2 for men) which also implies men's higher propensity to identify with the "breadwinner role".

In the following, factors which students think could influence their career, are presented in descending order of importance (Table 4).

Table 4

What influences career, in order of importance (1–5 Likert scale, mean and standard deviation) (N=90)

	Mean	Std. deviation
communication skills	4.57	0.69
professional experience	4.47	0.74
intellectual intelligence	4.42	0.65
social network	4.41	0.73
language skills	4.17	0.79
emotional intelligence	4.1	0.89
sacrifice	4.06	0.85
money	3.73	0.93
willingness to travel	3.7	0.95
degree classification	3.68	1.1
IT skills	3.67	0.94
family background	3.61	1.04
number of degrees	3.29	1.13

Source: Authors' data collection, 2022.

The findings show that important, or rather important, aspects of careers include communication skills, professional experience, intellectual intelligence, social network, as well as language skills, emotional intelligence, and sacrifice. According to students, it is somewhat less important for careers to have money, willingness to

travel, the right degree classification, IT skills, and family background. The ranking appears consistent with the fact that a large proportion of students plan their careers in social sciences. Male and female students assessed career factors similarly, but degree classifications were significantly more important for single students than for those already married or cohabiting. Significance of t-test: 0.026; mean: 3.82 for singles and 3.23 for married or cohabiting students.

The functions of the family for students and the factors influencing family life. When asked the open-ended question about what family meant to them, students gave fairly unanimous answers: security, stable emotional background, belonging, community, financial and emotional support, love, peace, and quiet. All these are elements of emotional well-being and reflect emotional recognition. The closed-ended questions on family are shown in order of importance in Table 5.

Table 5

What is important to students about family, in order of importance (1–5 Likert scale, mean and standard deviation) (N=90)

Family:	Mean	Std. deviation
Provides emotional recognition.	4.37	0.81
Provides psychological well-being.	4.34	0.95
Is more important than career.	3.88	1.3
Is the only way to achieve happiness.	3.71	1.14
Comes with sacrifices in one's professional life, which one must make.	3.63	0.95

Source: Authors' data collection, 2022.

When compared with the statements on career, students clearly put family first and career second. In addition to strongly agreeing with family's role in providing emotional recognition and ensuring psychological well-being, students also tended to agree that family was more important than career, that family was the only way to be truly happy, and that family involved sacrifices in one's professional life which must be made. There was a high level of agreement among students on all these statements, without variation by gender or marital status.

In the following, the factors which may influence students' future (or possibly current) family life are presented in descending order of importance (Table 6).

Table 6

What influences the future family life, in order of importance (1–5 Likert scale, mean and standard deviation) (N=90)

	Mean	Std. deviation
emotional intelligence	4.53	0.753
communication skills	4.27	0.859
intellectual intelligence	4.22	0.926
sacrifice	4.12	0.885
money	3.8	1.134
career opportunities	3.49	0.997
social network	3.37	1.258
willingness to travel	3.33	0.994
parents	2.91	1.135
language skills	2.62	1.361



professional experience	2.51	1.4
degree classification	2.38	1.259
number of degrees	2.18	1.195

Source: Authors' data collection, 2022.

Emotional intelligence and communication skills are the most important aspects, but intellectual intelligence, sacrifice, and social networks are also important. These were also relevant aspects for careers. In terms of future family life, the influence of career prospects is also important. Money was more important than for careers, but willingness to travel was less important. In addition, the parents' influence on future family life was rated relatively low. Work experience and language skills were important for careers but understandably less crucial for family life. Students considered the number of degrees the least important, as with careers, but in this case the degree classification did not matter either. There was no difference in the assessment of any factor by students' marital status, but men felt that their social network, language skills, and professional experience were likely to influence their future family life more than women, (significance of t-test for social network: 0.003; mean: 4.11 for men and 3.17 for women. Significance of t-test for language skills: 0.019; mean: 3.26 for men and 2.44 for women. Significance of t-test for professional experience: 0.013; mean: 3.21 for men and 2.32 for women) in line with traditional gender roles.

Reconciling and Timing Career and Family Life

Students also evaluated statements on reconciling work and private life. Although university students were surveyed, it might be interesting to examine their priorities in terms of work-life balance and their timing of family life and career development (Table 7).

Table 7
Agreement with statements about reconciling family and career, in order of importance (1–5 Likert scale, mean and standard deviation) (N=90)

	Mean	Std. deviation
The family's psychological well-being is more important than its material well-being.	3.8	0.902
Career and family are equally important.	3.23	1.227
Building a career involves family-related sacrifices.	2.96	1.038
The family's psychological well-being can only be ensured by career sacrifices.	2.3	0.953
Family and career cannot be reconciled.	1.99	1.033

Source: Authors' data collection, 2022.

Table 7 shows greatest agreement on the pre-eminence of the family's psychological well-being over its material well-being and the equal importance of career and family. However, students were more likely to disagree that the family's psychological well-being could only be ensured through career sacrifices, and that family and career could not be reconciled. Opinions were mixed on whether career building involved family-related sacrifices, with a mean of 2.96, corresponding to the "neither agree nor disagree" response. There were no significant differences by gender

and marital status. Interestingly, 65.6% of students thought that their degree would positively affect their work-life balance, 32.2% foresaw no impact, and only 2.2% thought it would have a negative impact, with no differences by gender and marital status.

In terms of timing of family and career, 14.6% of students planned to launch their career at 20–25, just over half at 26–30, and only a third over 31, with no difference by gender or marital status. However, students planned to start a family somewhat later. Almost half of students said they would start a family at 26–30, with a similar proportion at 31–35, and only a few students responded earlier or later, with no difference by gender or marital status.

Discussion. In this paper social sciences students' career and family plans were investigated in an exploratory quantitative pilot study at the second largest university in Hungary. This study is partly motivated by the need for university students' prospective employers to know students' employment-related and personal plans, as the self-directed "protean" career vision [19] has become dominant in addition to the traditional vertical advancement within or possibly between organisations [2]. Furthermore, the simultaneous examination of career and family plans in this research mirrors the Kaleidoscope Career Model [35], whereby individuals align their career with their personal life plans, among other things.

Since Hungarian university students are generally family-oriented [11, 12], as is the adult Hungarian population [44], the results of this paper suggest that family was more important than career also for social sciences students. In terms of timing, in accordance with the findings of Mohácsi and Juhász [28], career building slightly preceded family formation in young people's plans, although a fairly high proportion of students planned to simultaneously start their career and family (in line with findings on female medical students, see Feith et al. [13]). The results of this research also showed that students were relatively optimistic about reconciling career and family, with no significant differences by gender and marital status.

In addition, two-thirds of students considered their degree to positively affect their work-life balance. Furthermore, despite increasingly symmetrical gender role perceptions among university students [17], men in this research tended to identify more with the traditional breadwinner role, and their responses on career goals were more pronounced than those of women. However, no differences by students' marital status were observed in the importance of family and career, and strangely, not even regarding their timing.

For students, career primarily meant a source of livelihood and professional development, but self-fulfilment and self-actualisation (self-directed "protean" career type) [19] were also mentioned by several (mainly female) students. Traditional vertical advancement [2] as a career definition was mentioned relatively infrequently (and more by male students), presumably due to the primarily helping nature of the field and the lower expected income.

Interestingly, professional and social recognition was hardly mentioned in the open-ended question on careers, but in the closed-ended question, the prestige aspect of careers was even slightly more important than the financial aspect. The latter result



is consistent with the fact that earnings in social sciences and the public sector in general are lower than in the private sector [13, 4].

A further explanation is that in this paper, just university students were examined, and according to the previously presented survey by Szonda Ipsos, the prestige aspects of careers are more pronounced among young people with a higher education degree. However, the fact that in the open-ended question, the financial aspects of careers were much more important than professional and social recognition could also mean that students may later leave the field for a job in the private sector with higher earnings. This is somewhat contradicted by our finding that only 20% planned a career unrelated to social sciences.

Regarding the factors which influence career prospects, students considered work experience as very important, which they could acquire, as they were still studying, through internships or paid and voluntary work alongside their studies. The literature [39] also points out that employers expect young people to have several years of work experience, which is not always available. The impact of social networks was also considered as crucial for career progression, in line with the literature [48, 18, 22]. Among the human capital factors from the model of Judge et al. [20], language skills were important, with the reduced role of degree classification and IT skills. According to the results of this study, language learning was a key goal for over half of the students after graduation, even though the degree was conditional on a language certificate at the time of the survey. Furthermore, 20% of students planned to study abroad and 10% to work abroad after graduation.

A further finding was that the number of degrees was not considered an important career-advancing factor, presumably because respondents were currently focussed on getting their first (or possibly second, master's) degree.

As for psychological competences, communication skills and intellectual intelligence were considered the most important, while emotional intelligence was only moderately important. In terms of motivations from the study by Judge et al. [20], sacrifice also emerged as a career-influencing factor, presumably because of the potential difficulty of reconciling family and career and the nature of the profession. Finally, in contrast to young people interviewed in the Szonda Ipsos survey, students did not consider important the influence of family background, presumably because the sample only comprised university students with relatively favourable social background.

Young people were also relatively consistent in their views on the meaning of family, with emotional security and psychological well-being in the main focus. In line with Engler's findings [11, 12], an important (though not the most important) condition for starting a family, according to students, was career, adequate financial background, and relationships. In addition, students considered important both emotional and intellectual intelligence as well as good communication skills and sacrifice. Engler's findings [11, 12] were corroborated by the insubstantial influence which students perceived their parents had on their future family life. Finally, language skills, professional experience, degree classification, and number of degrees were not found to be important factors for future family life.

Conclusions. An important implication of this research for prospective employers is the need to adapt their HR strategies to young people's family and career plans. The findings also point to the importance of students meeting their own expectations, and exploratory factor analysis shows that students' career goals, alongside establishing professional relationships, include meeting their own expectations. This is in line with modern career models (in particular the self-directed, protean career concept and the Kaleidoscope Career Model). This research also highlights that students' career goals are already emphasised during university, when they can already start building their careers, so there may be a need for employers to strengthen their cooperation with higher education. The introduction of dual training, which is increasingly popular, is another good option, whereby young people can gain more exposure to the labour market and develop more realistic career plans than without experience. As presented in the analysis, students perceive the importance of professional experience in careers, so encounters with the world of work may also help students by allowing them to include work experience on their résumé, which provides an advantage in the labour market.

A further implication of this research is that although young people's gender role perceptions are changing [17], the findings show that in several cases, men and women wish to conform to traditional gender roles in terms of career and family life even in this "female-dominated" field of education. There is also a sense of naivety among students in that they do not fully grasp the difficulties of reconciling family and career, which is due to a lack of experience and awareness that this is still more difficult for women than men.

Limitations and further research prospects. A limitation of the research is that the sample was relatively small and, although a comprehensive survey was conducted, with a relatively high response rate, the results can only be generalised to students studying social sciences at the given university. Hence, another limitation of this research is that an exploratory pilot study is not suitable for hypothesis testing, which could be instead carried out on a larger, possibly multi-university probability sample. Further research plans could include a qualitative interview study on the topic, as well, as a questionnaire survey is not suitable for exploring deeper relationships. In addition, in the framework of a future large-scale quantitative survey covering several Eastern and Central European countries, the different training areas will also become comparable, and regional comparisons would also be possible on the above topic. It can be assumed that students' career and family plans differ by the field of study, and there may be differences by country and region, even within a single field of study. If the number of respondents and the sampling method of the survey allow, it is possible to include other explanatory variables in addition to the students' gender and marital status, and to examine their impact on the young people's plans using multivariate regression methods.



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