

Gender Differences in Attitudes towards the Interconnection of Family Life and Work

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Abstract

This quantitative research study intends to capture and to analyse data with regards to the views of Maltese males (N = 27) and females (N = 92) towards the interconnection of family life and work or career. In this research, differences with respect to gender regarding attitudes and the way in which individuals value things from a male/female perspective are portrayed. The aim is to quantify and get a generalized picture of the males' and females' views by measuring their attitudes towards such concepts in relation to family life and work

Keywords: Gender, Roles, Attitudes, Work-family, Career

Literature Review

1.1 Work-Family Balance

Work-family balance can be referred to as the absence of work-family conflict, and the presence of work-family facilitation (Frone, 2003). Specifically, Greenhaus and Beutell (1985), described work-family conflict as an imbalance between the pressures of work and family duties (Frone, 2003). A bidirectional dimension can be observed as there could be work-to-family conflict, or vice versa, family-to-work conflict (Frone, 2003). On the other hand, work-family facilitation is explained as family life (or work) becoming easier and enriched because of work (or family) (Frone, 2003). A similar bidirectional connection is also present. In addition, there are other researchers who take a social-systems model stance, whereby the interaction of work and family is portrayed in terms of a best fit rather than a balance (Rothausen, 2009).

Moreover, what constitutes work-family balance might be "a range of different distributions of attention, commitments, or outcomes that may differ from one person to another in accordance with individual preferences" (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011, p. 173). Such a definition is consistent with a person-environment fit. Balance seen from this perspective indicates that the overall attention given to work and family roles would give different results depending on what is prioritized by the individual in question (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011). Yet, further exploration might still be needed due to the limitations in the notion itself (Greenhaus, Collins, & Shaw, 2003).

1.2 Changes in the Family and Work including the Maltese Context

In recent years, the term work-family balance has been researched extensively. The reason being the increase in dual-earner partners and single-parents in the work-force (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011).

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In spite of being considered as a rigid societal institution due to its resistance to change, families have still been subjected to historical processes which have altered family life as a consequence, creating diverse families (Zimmerman, 2001). Abela (2000) stresses that this concern is also growing in Malta, because of the many changes taking place, with "relationship patterns and dynamics becoming increasingly complex and differentiated from the relatively simple traditional models" (Azzopardi, 2007, p. 13). Tabone's (1995) definition of family incorporates cohabitation as part of the transition from the old-style to more present-day ways of living along with other changes in society, even more-so for youngsters (Abela, Casha, Borg Xuereb, Inguanez, & Sammut Scerri, 2012). The economy scene is also morphing due to higher living costs, forcing families to live on a budget, which might be difficult to come to terms with (Abela, 2009).

In 2014, despite that there was an overall increase of both genders working, the employment rates were still generally lower among women in the European countries, with Malta having the third lowest female employment rate of 49.3% (Eurostat: Statistics Explained, 2015). However, longer-term studies show a significant rise in working women over the years, with a percentage of 36.4% in 2005 rising to 52.1% in 2014 (Labour Force Survey, 2015). Interestingly, as reported by the Eurostat data for Malta in 2011, there also seems to be disparity between genders working part-time jobs, with a much higher percentage of 25.7% women contrasting the 6.7% of men (De Giovanni, 2013). Borg (2011) mentions that more than half of Maltese employees work more than the standard eight-hours/day of work (Abela et al., 2012). According to the European Values Survey (2009), family is prioritized over work, with a majority of 93% of the Maltese giving superior value to family (Abela, 2009).

1.3 Gender Differences in relation to Work-Family Balance

Duxbury, Higgans, and Lee (1994), and Lero (2003) report that "not only are women now more likely to work outside the home, but it is now more common for men to fulfil more responsibilities within the home" (Mcelwain, Korabik, & Rosin, 2005, p. 269). Even though changes in attitudes are reported towards more egalitarianism, "there remains an unequal household division of labour, often supported by men's and women's gendered beliefs about appropriate work and family roles" (Keene & Quadagno, 2004, p. 5).

In view of these issues there have been different approaches, particularly, the gender-similarity model. Bielby (1992), as well as Loscocco and Leicht (1993) use this model to predict that "the convergence in men's and women's work and family demands should lead to a convergence in attitudes toward work and family responsibilities and feelings of work-family balance" (Keene & Quadagno, 2004, p. 5). Contrary to this view, Ferree (1990), Bielby and Bielby (1989), and Pleck (1977), use the gender-difference model which focuses on the normative belief that men and women are different, picturing men as having the responsibility of a paid job and women taking care of the family (Keene & Quadagno, 2004). Overall, the latter has been more widely supported.

Differences also seem to emerge in gender preferences in work and family domains (Thorntwaite, 2002). In seeking a better balance between work and family, both males and females strongly express their preference towards reduced hours of work (Thorntwaite, 2002). Interestingly though, unlike women, men seek shorter hours of work not because of the issue of parenthood or to allocate more time for familial responsibilities, "but rather to the desire of men to have more time for themselves and their own activities" (Thorntwaite, 2002, p. 9). Yet again, there were males who reasoned in a similar way to women in that they wanted to find more time to spend with their children (Thorntwaite, 2002).

Moreover, the European Foundation (2000) found that the majority of working men would like to have their female partners who work preferably on a part-time basis, whereas only a small percentage of employed males preferred that their female partners remain at home (Thorntwaite, 2002). Women, more than men, prefer a part-time job with the reasons being: values associated with children's upbringing, having a partner who is actively employed, and having financial security (Thorntwaite, 2002). Latta and O'Conghaille (2000) explain how men negatively perceive working part-time jobs. Moreover, there are "financial restrictions, societal and cultural preconceptions of women's and men's roles, and differences in family support structures" (Thorntwaite, 2002, p. 12).

Paid work appears to be preferred by men due to being taught that they are not worthy enough to help with housework, whereas a sense of emotional fulfilment from paid jobs is gained (Thorntwaite, 2002). Literature also looks at how genders perceive family life. Although changes in attitudes towards the commitment of gender equality are reported, studies reveal that "they also seem not to be practicing this equality in areas such as division of household labour" (Apparala, 1999, p. 10). Moreover, the studying of the husbands' attitudes toward their involvement in household activities is far less researched, with the studies available showing inconsistencies (Apparala, 1999). With regards to the gender division of household tasks one finds various theories. According to the gender-perspective theory, it is mainly the women's responsibility in familial concerns due to this being considered the norm, resulting in greater work-family conflict for women (Beek & Bloemberg, 2011). The social-role theory in Lam and Haddad (1992) states that, "men's perceptions of what is suitable in terms of behaviour for men and women would define their contributions to family work" (Apparala, 1999, p. 18). In fact, Feerre (1991) reports that the work at home is still divided on the basis of gender (Apparala, 1999).

Women's chores, such as cooking and cleaning are more time-bound compared to the tasks done by men, for example, house repair-work, which can be delayed. Women usually multi-task more than men and are often responsible for most child-rearing responsibilities (Beek & Bloemberg, 2011). White (1999) argued that, "the fact that most mothers still carry the lion's share of the work load for child care and domestic chores, suggest that females are balancing a qualitatively and quantitatively different set of demands than males" (Graf, 2007, p.8).

1.3.1 Gender differences and work-family balance in the Maltese context.

Research pertaining to the Maltese context is still somewhat limited. Most of the work reviewed below is done by Abela (1998; 2011) and Borg Xuereb (2008). Over the years, a number of changes have taken place, such as the previously mentioned increase in female employment. However, more often than not, women do not invest in full-blown careers because their progress is less continuous, unlike that of men who can take a linear career path, with the result of women not making it to top positions. This can be better exemplified by the "glass-ceiling" metaphor. Powell (2012) refers to the glass-ceiling metaphor as an "invisible barrier in front of women seeking to move up organizational hierarchies" (Smith, Caputi, & Crittenden, 2012, p. 1). Although women might have successfully managed to defeat this in some ways, they have not yet achieved tangible equality with men. In fact, Abela (1998) found that there is still a rigid social construction of gender.

According to Abela (2011), a good number of Maltese female psychology students declared that they desired to have a non-traditional family, with a career as well as equal rights with their future husbands. Abela (2011) stated that the number of females in paid employment is expanding, with measures taking place as women are also envisaged as a means to sustaining the welfare state. Moreover, women themselves are opting to work and are aiming at career paths with better levels of education (Abela, 2011). Borg Xuereb (2008) also reports that in most cases, Maltese women have to work due to financial pressures since the husband's salary on its own is not enough. With this, families have to face the issue of work-family balance. Remarkably, from most of the literature found, such scenarios are often biased towards women with the many changes seemingly revolving around females, excluding men's attitudes towards the idea of dual-earner families and the shift towards non-traditional family lifestyles.

Various studies show that although sharing is idealized, women who work outside homes are still burdened with 80% of housework and caring responsibilities (Abela, 2011). In line with this, Borg Xuereb (2008) conducted research which looked into parenting chores and found that men did less than promised when they became fathers. This may be explained by some of the reasons mentioned above, for instance, the internalization of gender roles as part of one's identity (Abela, 2011). Gender ideologies depicted in the mass media may also add to this by portraying men as distanced from their family, while women being overly responsible for their families. In addition, economy is also gender-biased, with most husbands working full-time, whereas females regarded as secondary earners. There is also the issue of maternity, and as Carter (1999) reports, with children in the family, demands drastically increase but women still take the bigger share (Abela, 2011).

Methodology

2.1 Research Question and Research Design

With the target of generalizing the views of gender attitudes towards family and work, the research question is: "Are there any male and female differences in attitudes towards family life and work?" A positivistic paradigm was applied as it is "concerned with variables" whereby there is no interference of the researcher's values ensuring objectivity (Kura, 2012, p. 2). Positivism uses quantitative methodology and was used for this study since the aim was that of generalization and exploration of the differences or similarities across the variable of gender.

2.2 Sampling and Participants

Probability sampling was chosen as it allows random selection of participants (Parahoo, 2006) while also being representative (Polit & Beck, 2010). The specific type chosen was simple random sampling so as to obtain "selections which are made purely by chance" (Mathers, Fox, & Hunn, 2009, p. 11). The sample for this study was that of males and females attending a course at the University of Malta with the size of 120 students. Ages ranged from 17 to over 50 years. Most respondents attend traditional sciences and social-sciences courses. There was minimal variation between those single and those with a partner. Mainly, participants had no children.

2.3 Instruments Used

An adapted version of a standardized, structured, self-administered questionnaire was used for data collection. The questionnaire utilized was based upon a ready-made questionnaire (ISSP 2012 – Family and Changing Gender Roles IV Basic Questionnaire), with an internal reliability of .84 (Martinez, Paterna, Roux, & Falomir, 2010). Amendments were made to ensure relevance to the research question proposed for this study. The questionnaire was distributed via electronic mail to a random sample of students by the University of Malta Registrar. The email (Appendix 3) consisted of information about the study and a web-link to access the questionnaire involving 50 questions. Section A covered the demographic variables. Section B consisted of 48 scale-questions and 2 open-ended questions. The scale questions were fashioned on a four-fold Likert-scale with the options ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. No in-between option, such as neither agree/disagree, was provided so that the participants take a decisive stance.

2.4 Validity and Reliability

Content validity was censured by the research supervisor. Face validity was also confirmed by giving the questionnaire to a lay person, by checking whether the questions reflect the topic being studied. Reliability was tested by means of a pilot test which was given to 10 people (Appendix 1). An evaluation sheet was attached at the end for participants' feedback (Appendix 2). No amendments were needed as all participants claimed that they had understood the questions and found them relevant to the topic under study. Approximately 10 minutes were needed to complete the questionnaire.

2.5 Ethical Considerations

Prior to commencing the research, all the necessary permissions were obtained, starting with the submission of the research proposal which was then approved by the University Research Ethics Committee and by the Office of the Registrar. All participants were informed about the study's nature and that data will be used for research purposes only. They were ensured that the decision to participate was voluntary. Contact details of the researcher were provided with the email. No personal information regarding participants was requested in the questionnaire, protecting anonymity at all times.

2.6 Data Analysis

Data was analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS Statistic for Windows, Version 23). The independent-samples t-test was used to analyse the attitudes towards family and work by gender. The two open-ended questions in the questionnaire were examined using descriptive analysis. Numerical data given by the participants was clustered into four groups for both questions, one asking respondents about the optimal number of weekly hours they would want their partners to spend at work and with family respectively. Percentages were issued according to gender.

Results

3.1 Descriptive Statistics for Demographic Data

A sample size of 120 participants responded by completing the questionnaire. Participants were asked to answer a number of demographic details including the following. Ninety-two of the respondents were females (76.7%) and 27 were males (22.5%). Only 1 was marked as neither male nor female, which was omitted as an outlier. The nominal categories for males and females were given the values of 1 and 2 correspondingly.

3.2 Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: The null hypothesis (H_0) states that there are no significant differences between gender and attitudes held towards family life and work. The alternative hypothesis (H_1) states that there are significant differences between gender and attitudes held towards family life and work. The level of significance used was that of .05.

3.3 Comparing Means for Gender

Given the rating score scale of 1 = strongly disagree and 4 = strongly agree, and with Levene's test for equality of variances not being significant ($p > .05$) so that equal variances were assumed, females scored significantly higher than males in the following test items, showing a stronger agreement with the statements.

Table 1: Table for gender differences with females showing stronger agreement than males in the statements

Statements	Gender	Mean	Standard Deviation	t	p-value
A working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work	Male	2.93	.781	-2.497	.01
	Female	3.29	.638	-2.236	
Men should work on a part-time basis after the child starts school	Male	1.85	.770	-2.332	.02
	Female	2.21	.672	-2.164	
Men should work on a part-time basis when the child is under school age	Male	1.85	.662	-2.565	.01
	Female	2.20	.597	-2.423	
I am in favour of paid leave when children are in the family	Male	3.41	.572	-2.197	.03
	Female	3.66	.519	-2.083	
Men do less than their fair share of the household work	Male	2.37	.792	-2.037	.04
	Female	2.74	.837	-2.100	
Men who work find difficulty when it comes to fulfil family responsibilities because of the amount of time they spend on the job	Male	2.26	.712	.794	.01
	Female	2.70	.767	.797	
Men do not help enough in housework and in caring for their families even when their female spouses work	Male	2.26	.764	-2.637	.01
	Female	2.71	.778	-2.663	

Note. The independent samples t-test shows the significant differences ($p < .05$) in attitudes towards family and work according to gender.

Conversely, males scored significantly higher than females in the next set of statements, showing stronger agreement on males' side. Levene's test for equality of variances was not significant ($p > .05$) in most cases, and so equal variances were assumed.

Table 2: Table for gender differences with males showing stronger agreement than females in the statements

Statements	Gender	Mean	Standard Deviation	t	p-value
All in all, family life suffers when the women has a full-time job	Male	2.33	.734	2.040	.04
	Female	1.98	.812	2.157	
A man's job is to earn money; a woman's job is to look after the home and family	Male	1.78	.892	3.521	.01 *
	Female	1.30	.508	2.637	
Women should take the primary responsibility for household chores, including cleaning, cooking, and caring for family members	Male	2.11	.892	3.494	.001
	Female	1.59	.614	2.862	
Men have the final say when making decisions with their female partner	Male	1.74	.813	4.787	.002 *
	Female	1.20	.399	3.367	
Men should work on a full-time basis when the child is under school age	Male	3.22	.614	3.712	.0003
	Female	2.64	.735	4.002	
Men do a lot more than their fair share of the household work	Male	2.30	.724	3.470	.001
	Female	1.83	.586	3.091	
Men should make decisions about how to bring up a child	Male	2.56	1.013	2.008	.05
	Female	2.15	.889	1.869	

Note. The independent samples t-test shows the significant differences ($p < .05$) in attitudes towards family and work according to gender.

(* Levene's test for equality of variance is significant in these cases ($p < .05$) and therefore equal variances are not assumed)

Therefore, with p-values being less than or equal to the .05 level of significance for the above items, the alternative hypothesis (H_1), stating significant differences between gender in work-family attitudes, was accepted. Thus, the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected.

In addition, other important findings were tied to the following statements in relation to gender views. Levene's test for equality of variances was not significant ($p > .05$) and so equal variances were assumed.

Table 3: Table showing no gender differences

Statements	Gender	Mean	Standard Deviation	t	p-value
A job is all right, but what most women really want is a home and children	Male	1.96	.854	.275	.78
	Female	1.91	.821	.269	
Men give more importance to work even when their wives work	Male	2.52	.753	.322	.75
	Female	2.47	.718	.313	
Watching children grow up is life's greatest joy	Male	3.33	.734	-.618	.54
	Female	3.42	.650	-.578	
Many problems with regards to family life are because women are putting more effort towards their careers rather than their families	Male	2.22	1.013	1.462	.15
	Female	1.95	.817	1.300	
Having a full-blown career with numerous working opportunities and a good salary is life's greatest joy	Male	2.22	.892	-1.477	.14
	Female	2.46	.670	-1.265	
Women should make decisions about how to bring up a child	Male	2.22	.892	1.196	.23
	Female	2.02	.726	1.069	

Note. The independent samples t-test shows that there are no significant differences ($p > .05$) in attitudes towards family and work according to gender.

For the above test items, the p-values exceed the .05 level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis (H_0) was accepted, stating that there are no significant differences between genders and the attitudes held towards family and work. Par to this, the alternative hypothesis (H_1) of significant differences was rejected.

3.4 Gender Differences and Number of Weekly Hours for Work

Participants were asked the following question: "If you are currently living with a partner, or if in the future you intend to live with a partner, how many hours a week should your partner spend working outside home?" The number of hours were grouped into four clusters. By and large, female respondents reported longer number of hours they would want their male counterparts to work per week.

A good number of males (48%) and the majority females (75%) reported that they would like their partners to spend between 31 to 40 hours at work every week. The next majority of female participants (15%) selected the cluster of 41 to 50 hours weekly for their partners to work. This contrasts with the 37% of male participants, as these stated that 20 to 30 hours weekly are enough for their partners to work outside home. This category of 20 to 30 hours weekly was reported by 5% of the female participants. 15% of males chose 41 to 50 hours per week for their partners to spend at work, which reflects a lesser percentage of female participants selecting this cluster. Only 4% of females went for more than 50 hours per week for their partners to work, with no male participants reporting more than 50 hours weekly. These results are summarized in the table below.

Table 4: Table showing gender differences in terms of weekly hours at work

		Gender and hours per week for work				
		Hours per week for work				
		20-30	31-40	41-50	51-70	Total
Gender	Male	10	13	4	0	27
	Female	5	69	14	4	92
Total		15	82	18	4	119

Note. This table shows male and female responses for the number of hours they would like their partners to spend working outside home.

3.5 Gender Differences and Number of Weekly Hours for Family

Similarly, participants were asked to state the number of hours per week they would like their partners to spend with their families. Again, the number of hours were divided into four categories, as seen below.

Table 5: Table showing gender differences in terms of weekly hours for family

		Gender and hours for family per week				
		Hours for family per week				
		10-40	41-80	81-120	121-160	Total
Gender	Male	6	5	12	4	27
	Female	22	33	30	7	92
Total		28	38	42	11	119

Note. This table shows male and female responses for the number of hours they would like their partners to spend with their families.

The majority of females (36%) would prefer their male partners to spend 41-80 hours per week with their families. On the other hand, males (44%) would want more time for their female partners to spend with family (81-120 hours/week). A good number of females (33%) also selected between 81 and 120 hours per week they would like their partners to allocate for their family. A number of males with similar percentages (22%, 19%, and 15%) opted for 10-40 hours, 41-80 hours, and 121-160 hours per week respectively. 24% of females reported between 10-40 hours weekly, while 8% of females mentioned between 121-160 hours per week for their male partners to spend with their families.

3.6 Conclusion of Findings

Generally, the results demonstrate a number of significant differences between the independent gender variable and the dependent variables of the test items. Evidently, meaningful differences were found between males and females. These results provide the basis for the discussion presented in the next section, which will be compared to evidence-based literature.

Discussion

Gender has played a crucial role since most significant differences in attitudes towards family and work have emerged due to this variable. Through testing the first hypothesis, the alternative hypothesis was largely supported. Although nowadays one might expect that the differences in gendered beliefs towards sharing responsibilities have largely subsided, differences still remain (Keene & Quadagno, 2004) possibly due to our normative roots, whereby genders respond to dissimilar responsibilities in line with traditional beliefs (Keene & Quadagno, 2004). Indeed, it is commonly observed that males still hold on to conservative work-family attitudes whereby males are the major breadwinners and females as the primary caregivers (refer to Table 2). In this regard, it seems that the changing roles of women have given rise to the problem of work-family balance.

Yet, females differed from males in a dissimilar manner; although certain test items with which the females agreed showed that they, too, are still bound to traditional attitudes to some degree (refer to Table 1). Females believe that males cannot fully be there for the family because men have to spend more time at their jobs. This is consistent with the normative belief that women's responsibility still largely revolves around the family (Beek & Bloemberg, 2011). The social-role theory explains that women perceive themselves as primary caregivers embedded in their identity, whereas men are more inclined to work (Apparala, 1999). Consequently, work-family balance is more difficult to attain, because the attention given towards work and family is also based on gender (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011).

Nonetheless, women also scored higher than men in other aspects, which may perhaps reflect the refinement in attitudes towards equality in terms of work-family balance. Females, more than males, believe that working mothers can still have healthy relationships with their offspring and are also more in favour of certain family policies such as paid leave. Both genders prefer reduced hours; however, females still scored higher than males. Similarly, women prefer to work on a part-time basis more than males, possibly because, as stated by Latta and O'Conghaille (2000), there is negative stigma associated with males working part-time (Thorntwaite, 2002). To my view, women, seem to distance themselves further than do men from traditional gender roles. Yet, this might be because women are given more importance in most research. Having said that, if one takes a critical approach, similarities between genders might also be found, especially when it comes to certain circumstances.

No significant differences were found between males and females regarding certain issues (refer to Table 3), with the null hypothesis being supported in these instances. Males and females did not differ in view of child raising or career and employment. Possibly, this is because society is constantly changing and adapting itself accordingly. As reported by Duxbury, Higgans, and Lee (1994) and Lero (2003), both genders have changed their roles, with women's number rising in active employment and males taking responsibility for family chores (Mcelwain, Korabik, & Rosin, 2005), as responsibilities have been adding up for both. Thus, the need to share the load, both in family and work, has gained impetus more than before. The meaning of family has extended and financial burden increased, with work-family balance becoming more important (Abela, Casha, & Borg Xuereb, 2012), explaining the move away from traditional-bound attitudes as shown in these results. Despite being less evident than before, the divide between males and females in work-family balance is still present to some degree (Graf, 2007). Throughout the test items, significant differences were found to be influenced by gender. This is similar to the findings by various researchers, who found that inequality in shouldering and balancing the work-family duties still exists (Keene & Quadagno, 2004). Again, one may infer that these differences are hard-wired beliefs remaining very resistant to change, or that perhaps requiring a longer passage of time to become more flexible. Commonly, findings suggest that more needs to be done.

A local study conducted by Abela (2011), showed that there remains a gap for work-family balance to be achieved, even though equal gender-sharing is idealized. Gender was also descriptively analysed on the basis of time allocation for work and family. In a nutshell, one can observe that females chose more hours per week for their male counterparts to work (refer to Table 4). To the contrary, although both males and females selected more hours for family, there was a higher percentage of males who reported a greater number of weekly hours they would like their female partners to spend with their families (refer to table 5).

A similar pattern was found in the literature. Although women have entered the realm of employment, there is still discrepancy between genders and the time devoted to work. In fact, in the Eurostat data for Malta in 2011, statistics show that more females work on a part-time basis when compared to males (De Giovanni, 2013), with males spending more hours at work per week. As mentioned earlier on, men are often negatively stigmatized if they are not employed full-time (Thorntwaite, 2002). Such negative image deriving from the deep-seated traditional beliefs, may explain this difference. However, Borg (2011) reported that more than half of the Maltese are working very long hours. A possible explanation may be that nowadays, the lifestyles adopted by families are quite costly (Abela, 2009). Therefore, wage-earning cannot solely depend on men, but women too may need to work to sustain the family. Indeed, findings have revealed that males still allocated a good number of hours for their females to work, which in turn might be a reflection of today's changes in family and work.

The results obtained with regards to the number of hours devoted to family also reflect literature findings. Taking into account the Maltese context, despite the fact that work is considered important, 93% of the Maltese prioritize family over work (Abela, 2009). In fact, both male and female participants wanted their partners to spend more time with their families rather than at work. Nonetheless, males associated more family time for their female partners. Perhaps, the difference is linked to work as well. Males may have reported more hours for females to spend with families because they may have reasoned that women spend a lesser amount of time at work than do men. Moreover, spending time working outside home is regarded as more appealing to men, while they may not feel just as satisfied by spending more hours at home (Thorntwaite, 2002). Parallel to this, women opt for shorter hours of work especially when they become mothers (Thorntwaite, 2002). Therefore, it can be argued that differences are still present between genders. Noticeably, these differences may be derived from the economic systems which are often targeted towards viewing men as full-time workers, whereas females perceived as the secondary wage-earners. Furthermore, Carter (1999) reports that when children are born and demands increase, it is still women who have to shoulder most of these responsibilities (Abela, 2011).

Conclusion

The aim of the study was to explore gender attitudes towards family and work. Generally, attitudes varied across the variable studied. To arrive to this conclusion, a quantitative study was conducted through analysing questionnaire responses from a sample of 120 participants. The results attained were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics which tested the hypothesis emerging from the research question. Findings revealed that there still exist gender differences in attitudes towards work-family balance, but similarities were also found. Gendered results were mainly consistent with the literature compared. In view of these findings, the importance of studying attitudes cannot be disregarded as attitudes can be good predictors of actual behaviour (Apparala, 1999).

These findings may be used for future research and policy-making. With regards to research, it may be of interest if the study is conducted longitudinally as it may reflect how attitudes are influenced by the societal change occurring over time. In addition, other demographic variables such as age, marital status, education, parenthood and employability may be used to further scrutinize the test items, to allow for profounder understanding of differences or similarities with regards to family life and work. Future policies may embark on allowing an equal payment for both genders when they are doing the same job. This makes it easier for males to work shorter hours and have more time for their families, while allowing females to work and also contribute to the financial stability of the family. Reduced hours and parental leave should also become the norm for couples to utilize. On the other hand, policies should aim to help families in child upbringing and give supplementary incentives to families with more needs.

All in all, citizens should be given the opportunity to be heard when voicing their opinions and taken into consideration when making amendments to policies.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Pilot Questionnaire

<p>1. Welcome</p> <p>I am a University student following the undergraduate course Bachelor in Psychology (Honours), and I am conducting this research as part of my course requirements. I would appreciate if you could kindly answer the following questionnaire which I am using for the data collection in order to write my dissertation. All the data which will be gathered from this questionnaire is confidential and your anonymity is assured. The data collected will only be utilized for the purpose of this research study, and will be destroyed after analysis of data is completed. If, for any reason, you wish to withdraw from answering the questionnaire, you are free to do so at any time. Please answer the questions honestly. No answer is either right or wrong.</p> <p>Thanking you in advance for your time.</p>
<p>2. Section A: Demographics</p> <p>1. Gender</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Male</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Female</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Other</p> <p>2. Age</p> <p><input type="text"/></p> <p>3. Which course are you following at the University of Malta?</p> <p><input type="text"/></p> <p>4. Status</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Married</p> <p><input type="radio"/> In a relationship</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Single</p> <p>5. Do you have any children?</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="radio"/> No</p>

3. Section B: Questions/Statements

Kindly answer the following questions by ticking one of the options on the scale provided. Some questions will require you to enter numerical information.

6. Please rate according to how much you agree or disagree with the following:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A pre-school child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Both men and women should compromise when making a decision about family activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A job is all right, but what most women really want is a home and children	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Men should work on a part-time basis after the child starts school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Being a housewife is just as satisfying as working for pay	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
All in all, family life suffers when the women has a full-time job	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Both the man and the woman should contribute to the household income	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When there is a child under school age, women should work on a full-time basis	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A man's job is to earn money; a woman's job is to look after the home and family	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Men give more importance to work even when their wives work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Watching children grow up is life's greatest joy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Women who work find difficulty when it comes to fulfil family responsibilities because of the amount of time they spend on the job	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
After the youngest child starts school, women should work on a part-time basis	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Many problems with regards to family life are because women are putting more effort towards their careers rather than their families	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Having children interferes too much with the freedom of their mothers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. If you are currently living with a partner, or if in the future you intend to live with a partner, how many hours a week should your partner spend working outside home?				
<input type="text"/>				
8. Please rate according to how much you agree or disagree with the following:				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Women should take the primary responsibility for household chores, including cleaning, cooking, and caring for family members	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Men have the final say when making decisions with their female partner	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
After the youngest child starts school, women should work on a full-time basis	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Women find it difficult to concentrate at work because of family responsibilities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Having a full-blown career with numerous working opportunities and a good salary is life's greatest joy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Men should work on a part-time basis when the child is under school age	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Women should make decisions about how to bring up a child	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Children are a financial burden on their parents	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Women do less than their fair share of the household work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Both partners should make decisions about how to bring up a child	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When there is a child under school age, women should work on a part-time basis	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am in favour of paid leave when children are in the family	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Both men and women should spend more time with their families	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Men should work on a full-time basis after the child starts school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Children under school age should go to a child care centre	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

9. If you are currently living with a partner, or if in the future you intend to live with a partner, how many hours a week should your partner spend with you and your family?

10. Please rate according to how much you agree or disagree with the following:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Men should work on a full-time basis when the child is under school age	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Men do a lot more than their fair share of the household work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My mother should have worked for pay when I was a child	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Having children interferes too much with the freedom of their fathers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Women have the final say when making decisions with their male partner	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Men do less than their fair share of the household work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Men who work find difficulty when it comes to fulfil family responsibilities because of the amount of time they spend on the job	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If I have a child, I am in favour of working even when the child is under school age	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Men do not help enough in housework and in caring for their families even when their female spouses work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Having children increases people's social standing/respect/status in society	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Men find it difficult to concentrate at work because of family responsibilities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If I have a child, I am in favour of working after the child starts school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Women do a lot more than their fair share of the household work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Men should take the primary responsibility for household chores, including cleaning, cooking, and caring for family members	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Having children restricts the employment and career chances of one or both parents	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Men should make decisions about how to bring up a child	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My father should have worked for pay when I was a child	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. The End				
Thank you!				

Appendix 2 – Evaluation Sheet

Evaluation Sheet

- How long did it take you to complete the questionnaire? _____
- Are there any questions that you did not understand well? Yes No
 If yes, please specify which questions where they: _____

- Are there any other questions you think should be included? Yes No
 If yes, please specify: _____

Thank You in Advance

Appendix 3 – E-mail to University Registrar for Participants

Dear Student,

My name is Elaine Gialanze' and I am currently following the undergraduate course Bachelor in Psychology (Honours). As part of my course requirements, I am in the process of completing a dissertation, the title of which is "Gender Differences in Attitudes towards the Interconnection of Family Life and Work", under the supervision of Dr. Katya De Giovanni. The study aims to examine whether there are differences or perhaps similarities between males and females with regards to work-family balance. The survey takes about 10 minutes to complete. Participation in this study is anonymous and the data collected will only be used for the purpose of the study. Your contribution will be kept fully confidential and is greatly appreciated.

Below kindly find attached the link to my questionnaire:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LS5PP7X>

Should you require further information kindly contact me on: elaine.gialanze.13@um.edu.mt

Thank you in advance.

Kind regards,

Elaine Gialanze'

Appendix 4 – Questionnaire

1. Welcome
<p>I am a University student following the undergraduate course Bachelor in Psychology (Honours), and I am conducting this research as part of my course requirements. I would appreciate if you could kindly answer the following questionnaire which I am using for the data collection in order to write my dissertation. All the data which will be gathered from this questionnaire is confidential and your anonymity is assured. The data collected will only be utilized for the purpose of this research study, and will be destroyed after analysis of data is completed. If, for any reason, you wish to withdraw from answering the questionnaire, you are free to do so at any time. Please answer the questions honestly. No answer is either right or wrong.</p> <p>Thanking you in advance for your time.</p>

2. Section A: Demographics

1. Gender

Male

Female

Other

2. Age

3. Which course are you following at the University of Malta?

4. Status

Married

In a relationship

Single

5. Do you have any children?

Yes

No

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Men give more importance to work even when their wives work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Watching children grow up is life's greatest joy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Women who work find difficulty when it comes to fulfil family responsibilities because of the amount of time they spend on the job	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
After the youngest child starts school, women should work on a part-time basis	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Many problems with regards to family life are because women are putting more effort towards their careers rather than their families	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Having children interferes too much with the freedom of their mothers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<p>7. If you are currently living with a partner, or if in the future you intend to live with a partner, how many hours a week should your partner spend working outside home?</p> <input type="text"/>				
<p>8. Please rate according to how much you agree or disagree with the following:</p>				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Women should take the primary responsibility for household chores, including cleaning, cooking, and caring for family members	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Men have the final say when making decisions with their female partner	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
After the youngest child starts school, women should work on a full-time basis	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

3. Section B: Questions/Statements

Kindly answer the following questions by ticking one of the options on the scale provided. Some questions will require you to enter numerical information.

6. Please rate according to how much you agree or disagree with the following:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A pre-school child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Both men and women should compromise when making a decision about family activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A job is all right, but what most women really want is a home and children	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Men should work on a part-time basis after the child starts school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Being a housewife is just as satisfying as working for pay	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
All in all, family life suffers when the woman has a full-time job	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Both the man and the woman should contribute to the household income	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When there is a child under school age, women should work on a full-time basis	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A man's job is to earn money; a woman's job is to look after the home and family	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Women find it difficult to concentrate at work because of family responsibilities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Having a full-blown career with numerous working opportunities and a good salary is life's greatest joy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Men should work on a part-time basis when the child is under school age	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Women should make decisions about how to bring up a child	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Children are a financial burden on their parents	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Women do less than their fair share of the household work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Both partners should make decisions about how to bring up a child	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When there is a child under school age, women should work on a part-time basis	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am in favour of paid leave when children are in the family	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Both men and women should spend more time with their families	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Men should work on a full-time basis after the child starts school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Children under school age should go to a child care centre	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. If you are currently living with a partner, or if in the future you intend to live with a partner, how many hours a week should your partner spend with you and your family?				
<input type="text"/>				
10. Please rate according to how much you agree or disagree with the following:				

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Women do a lot more than their fair share of the household work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Men should take the primary responsibility for household chores, including cleaning, cooking, and caring for family members	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Having children restricts the employment and career chances of one or both parents	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Men should make decisions about how to bring up a child	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My father should have worked for pay when I was a child	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Appendix 5 – SPSS Data

4. The End

Thank you!

		Gender			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	27	22.5	22.5	22.5
	Female	92	76.7	76.7	99.2
	Other	1	.8	.8	100.0
	Total	120	100.0	100.0	

Age Recoded into Four Variables					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	17-21	86	71.7	71.7	71.7
	22-27	20	16.7	16.7	88.3
	28-38	7	5.8	5.8	94.2
	39-56	7	5.8	5.8	100.0
	Total	120	100.0	100.0	

Course Recoded into Six Variables					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Social-Psychological, B.A. (Arts) or Masters with Psychology	36	30.0	30.0	30.0
	B.A. (Arts), B.Com, and Communication	17	14.2	14.2	44.2
	B.Sc. (Sciences) and Medicine, Mathematical, and Engineering	39	32.5	32.5	76.7
	Education, Computing, Business, and Economics	8	6.7	6.7	83.3
	Laws	4	3.3	3.3	86.7
	Masters and other courses	16	13.3	13.3	100.0
	Total	120	100.0	100.0	

Status					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Single	62	51.7	51.7	51.7
	In a relationship and Married	58	48.3	48.3	100.0
	Total	120	100.0	100.0	

Children: Yes/No					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	10	8.3	8.3	8.3
	No	110	91.7	91.7	100.0
	Total	120	100.0	100.0	