Facilitating Work And Family Conflict: Young Family Case

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Abstract
        The article refers to the concept of work and family conflict as the basic one. The goal of this article is to present the work and family reconciliation model for young families which is based on the qualitative research data findings (narratives, semi-structured interviews and focus group). The present-day individuals tend to take on many roles and responsibilities related to their work and family life, which definitely leads to work and family conflict. Representatives of young families seek to improve their professional life and confront diverse challenges forcing them to modify career. Employers' positive attitude and supportive role here is very significant, as well as clear need for the involvement of career counsellors and human resource specialists into the process of work and family conflict facilitation. The intention of the research was to analyse: the possibilities to reconcile work and family requirements for young families with children (under 12); ability to solve problems related to family needs; role tensions related to solving problems and possibilities for their reconciliation.

Keywords: Work and family conflict, support of executive and organisation, work and family reconciliation

Introduction
        The present-day society experiences the constant economic and social change reflecting on the complex reconciliation of work and young family needs. Finding in a vicious circle a young family struggles for both constant learning and integration into a labour market at the same time devoting time for a family having in mind the needs of children and spouse. Discussions referring to the latter issue are often described as work and family conflict or

family and work conflict, though usually both concepts are integral. The present article refers to the concept of work and family conflict as the basic one. The goal of this article is to present the work and family reconciliation model for young families which is based on the qualitative research data findings (narratives, semi-structured interviews and focus group). The object of the research is reconciliation of work and family.

The literature review of work and family reconciliation issue reveals several main themes, namely work and family conflict, the role of personality and satisfaction of involvement in family (work) affairs (Michel et al. 2009, Cesnauskas & Lazauskaite-Zabielske, 2014). Work and family conflicts appear when the needs of work and family do not correlate with the needs of family and work. The nature of such conflict contains negative consequences for all – an employee, his/her family and organization he/she belongs. Outlasting conflict causes stress, depression, as well as increases sickness rate or decreases self-satisfaction of work accomplished, or even family life. Simultaneously an organization is affected by inadequate employees' involvement in the implemented activities, increased intension to change working place, decrease of quality of the achieved results (Cesnauskas & Lazauskaite-Zabielske, 2014). Therefore, executives and administration of diverse organisations attempt to decrease work and family conflict by the different means creating flexible work schedules, supporting maternity/paternity leave or child care services (Moen, 2003, Kempe & Otonkorpi-Lehtoranta, 2006, Vuga & Juvan, 2013, Cesnauskas & Lazauskaite-Zabielske, 2014). Referring to the role theory it might be indicated that each role has specific expectations and needs which ignorance would definitely cause certain conflicts within the roles (Frone et al., 2003). It is highlighted that tension experienced by a person in particular domain, in this case it is work, is usually transferred to another domain, and in this case it is family (Cesnauskas & Lazauskaite-Zabielske, 2014). Following work and family conflict presented in the literature as the dominant construct, three models can be mentioned (Michel et al. 2009):

1) Frone, Russell & Cooper's (1992) model. The model conceptualizes work and family conflict or family and work conflict as mediating components between job stressors, job involvement, family stressors and family involvement, and outcomes of job distress, family distress, and depression.

2) Carlson & Kacmar's (2000) model. This model conceptualizes work and family conflict or family and work conflict as mediating components between work role conflict, work role ambiguity, work time demands, job involvement, work satisfaction and family role conflict, family role ambiguity, family time demands, family involvement, family satisfaction (or live satisfaction).

3) Carlson & Perrewé's (1999) adapted model version. The following model refers to work and family conflict conceptualized as separate work and family conflict or family and work conflict constructs, i.e. work and family conflict or family and work conflict are mediating between work social support, work involvement, work role conflict, work time demands, work role ambiguity, family social support, family involvement, family role conflict, family time demands, family role ambiguity and job satisfaction and family satisfaction.

Discussing the construct of work and family conflict the following elements might be distinguished: work and family conflict, family and work conflict, work social support, work involvement, work role conflict, work time demands, work role ambiguity, family social support, family involvement, family role conflict, family time demands, family role ambiguity, job satisfaction, life satisfaction. Michel et al. (2009) indicates that, for instance, family time demands (hours worked, number of children and age of youngest child) rather fractionally effect family and work conflict. This is highly significant implication for employees experiencing family demands, especially working mothers. According to Michel et al. (2011) research data, one of the main factors affecting decisions being related to work and family conflict refers to support provided for an employee by an organization and its executive. Needless to mention, work and family conflict is also tackled at state level by regulating application of flexible work management means.

Finally, there are career counsellors who are supposed to release presumable tension between parent and employer invoking all the necessary counselling and consultations for both parts. This could be applied by presenting diverse work and family management strategies leading to the gained basic knowledge about mechanisms a person uses to influence or facilitate conflicts (Wayne, Musisca & Fleeson, 2004). In any case, the focus of career counsellors should refer on assisting individuals to re-evaluate career choices, negotiate changes at work, make productive and effective career decisions, as well as enhance their work and life balance (Neult & Pickerell, 2005; Wayne, Musisca & Fleeson, 2004).

Methodology
Data collection and analysis

The article presents data referring to three qualitative research cases implemented under the project "Model of young families' parenthood and work reconciliation". The data obtained covers just a part of the whole project research. The findings of qualitative research would certainly help to distinguish the needs and challenges, as well as perceive the common grounds for collaboration among three major target groups in the process of

family and career reconciliation, i.e. young parents, employers and experts in career counselling. All three research instruments (narrative interviews with young families, semi-structured interviews with employers and focus group with career counsellors and human resource specialists) were prepared according to the theoretical research insights.

The analysis of narrative interviews with young parents is based on the narrative analysis method (Søderberg, 2006). The interviews cover retold experience related to the different life stages starting from child birth. The special emphasis is devoted for the experiencing the return to work after maternity/parental leave, considering diverse possibilities for career changes and/or pursue of career, experiencing employers' attitude and family support during the mentioned process, as well as other issues related to the research problem. The article presents empirical narrative data based on the thematic analysis (Soderberg, 2006, Virgilaite-Meckauskaite & Mazeikiene, 2012), when data is distributed into the themes, then ranked according to the relevance in a codebook.

The semi-structured interview instruments designed for employers were focused on the following topics: a) creation of family-friendly work place; b) necessity for flexible work schedule; c) development of decrees regulating support in respect to the needs of young parents. The research results of semi-structured interviews with the employers are presented following the method of text analysis described by Satu & Kyngas (2008), when deduction is applied for subcategories, categories and the main theme being provided.

The questions for the experts in the focus group were constructed to cover the topics related to career guidance and human resource (HR) specialists' experience with young parents looking for a job or seeking any guidance. The answers provided certain insights how the specialists support such employees or candidates in terms of information provision or career guidance, how they collect information about the family status and needs. The career guidance/HR specialists were asked to provide comments on the existing legislation and state provisions for young families with children in employment. The results obtained are presented according to the method of text analysis described by Satu & Kyngas (2008), when deduction is applied for subcategories, categories and the main theme being provided.

Research participants

The planned research covers several stages, namely, (1) the analysis of literature, (2) the interview with young families, employers and career guidance/HR specialists, (3) the questionnaire-survey for young families, and (4) preparation of work-young family reconciliation model. The tables below

present certain characteristics of three qualitative research cases accomplished during the second stage:

1) 15 narrative-interviews with young families (both mother and father) were implemented in January-April, 2015. Research participants were selected according to the following criteria: parents under the age of 35; a family with a child (children) under the age of 12; both partners have experience in a professional realm, i.e., have already worked before children were born. The characteristics of the research participants are presented in the table below (see Table 1):

Table 1. The characteristics of young parents' as research participants

Code of interview participant	Age of parent		No. of children	Age of child/ children (from the youngest to the oldest)
	Mother	Father		
P1	33	33	2	7 years; 12 years
P2	34	35	1	7 years
P3	30	35	1	7 years
P4	35	33	1	8 years
P5	33	34	2	4 years; 6 years
P6	34	33	2	3 years; 5 years
P7	32	31	1	3 years
P8	29	28	1	0,5 years
P9	34	33	2	4 years; 6 years
P10	35	34	2	6 years; 11 years
P11	31	29	1	5 years
P12	32	32	2	6 years; 9 years
P13	32	32	3	4 months, 3 years, 6 years
P14	29	30	2	4 years; 6 years
P15	27	30	1	0,5 years

2) 14 interviews with the employers representing private and public sectors in different counties were implemented in February-April, 2015. The target group was compound by applying targeted selection method in non-probability sampling. The characteristics of research participants are presented in the table below (see Table 2):.

Table 2. The characteristics of employers' as research participants

Code of interview participants	Type of organisation/institution	Number of employees	Position of the interview participant
E1	Vocational school	155 persons	Director
E2	Catering institution	5 persons	Director
E3	University department	20 persons	Head of the department
E4	Preschool institution	38 persons	Head
E5	Pro-gymnasium	72 persons	Deputy director
E6	Lower secondary school	26 persons	Director
E7	Public limited liability company (raw material recycling)	582 persons	Personnel manager
E8	Transport company	20 persons	Director
E9	Transport and cargo transportation company	23 persons	Director
E10	Private limited company/Foreign Language centre	50 persons	Director
E11	Individual enterprise (photo services)	15 persons	Company owner
E12	Private limited liability company (production of blanks)	25 persons	Director
E13	Public institution/Health care institution department	8 persons	Head of the department
E14	Public institution (art area)	133 persons	Director

The focus group of 6 experts in career counselling was organized in September, 2015. The experts were selected according to their compliance to the goals of the research (see Table 3).

Table 3. The characteristics of the experts in career counselling

Code of interview participants	Type of organisation /institution	Position of the interview participant	Experience in career counselling field
CC1	University Career centre	Head	5
CC2	University Career centre	Specialist	3
CC3	Private kindergarten	HR	6
CC4	Lithuanian Labour Exchange, Youth Dpt.	Head	5
CC5	University Career centre	Head	11
CC6	Enterprise	HR	4

Research results

The aim of the study is to present the common ground of the experiences of young parents and employers, and define the role of career counsellors in the process of family and work reconciliation.

Narratives' perspective

The interviews with young families where both partners (mother and father) were involved have distinguished a big change in family models, as nowadays most of fathers (gender aspect) feel more pressure to contribute actively to family welfare and child care and this implies bigger stress due to the transformation from "Me" to "Father" or "Mother" (see Figure 1).

The major topic revealed while analysing the reconciliation of work and family in the narratives refers to experiences of multiple conflict that includes the following topics: *family influence on work-life, mother's inner conflict, searching for balance between work and family, time planning difficulties, challenges of coordinating different activities*.

The analysis of family situations demonstrates a vivid conflict related to the tension at work, longing for self-expression that is time-consuming and endangering family needs. When families discuss the needs of their children, the own needs are mentioned as well (P6): *First, it is your job where you spend the most of your day time - 50%, after the work you devote your evening time to your child – preparing homework together and/or doing other activities – reading a book, making some crafts – it is about 30 %, whereas 20% of time is devoted for communication with a child, doing household chores and maybe reading a book in the evening when a child is asleep (Family P6: husband 33 yrs., wife 34 yrs., son 5 yrs., daughter 3 yrs.).*
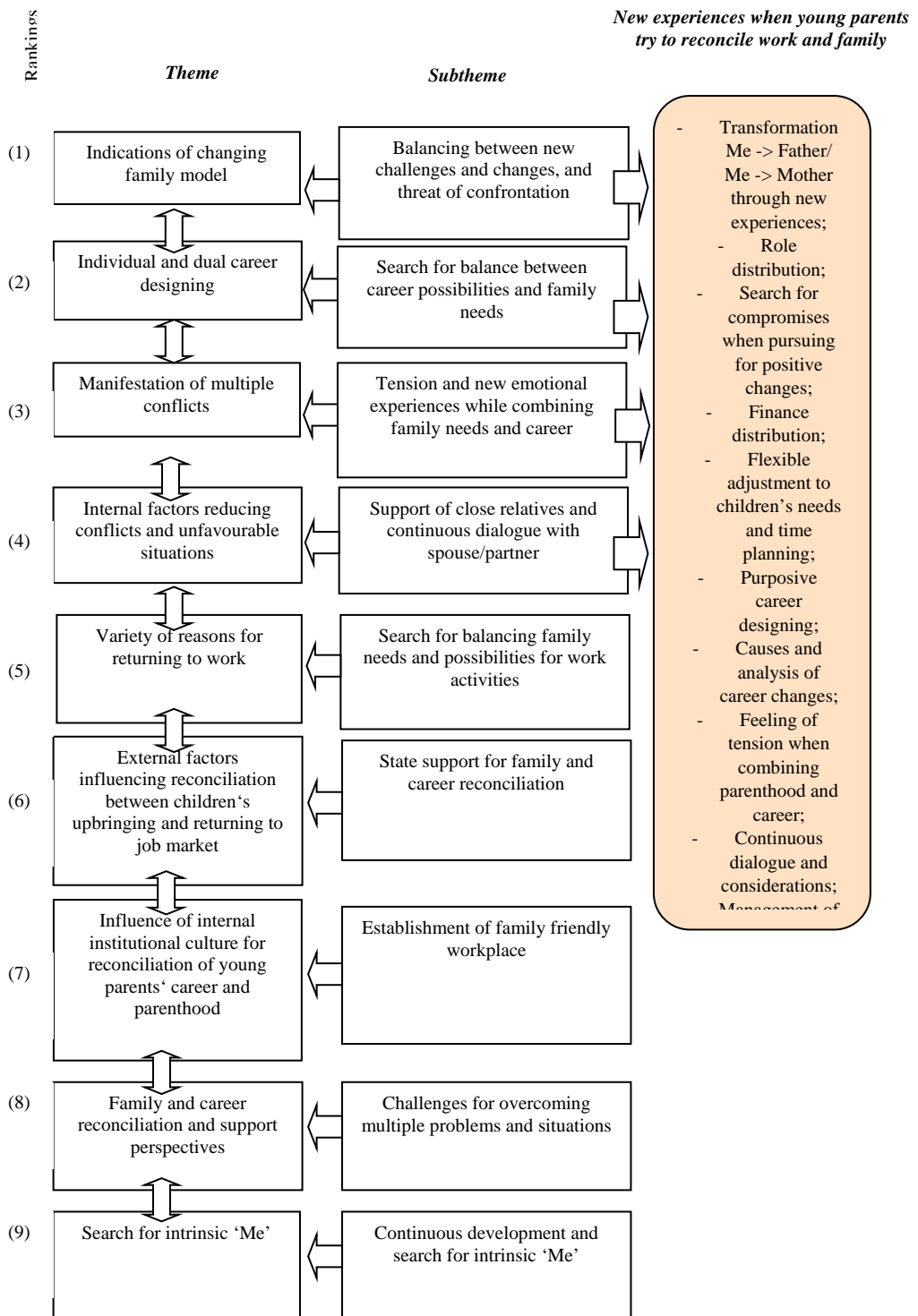
Rankings

New experiences when young parents try to reconcile work and family

Theme   *Subtheme*

(1) | Indications of changing family model | Balancing between new challenges and changes, and threat of confrontation

(2) | Individual and dual career designing | Search for balance between career possibilities and family needs

(3) | Manifestation of multiple conflicts | Tension and new emotional experiences while combining family needs and career

(4) | Internal factors reducing conflicts and unfavourable situations | Support of close relatives and continuous dialogue with spouse/partner

(5) | Variety of reasons for returning to work | Search for balancing family needs and possibilities for work activities

(6) | External factors influencing reconciliation between children's upbringing and returning to job market | State support for family and career reconciliation

(7) | Influence of internal institutional culture for reconciliation of young parents' career and parenthood | Establishment of family friendly workplace

(8) | Family and career reconciliation and support perspectives | Challenges for overcoming multiple problems and situations

(9) | Search for intrinsic 'Me' | Continuous development and search for intrinsic 'Me'

Right-hand box:
- Transformation Me -> Father/ Me -> Mother through new experiences;
- Role distribution;
- Search for compromises when pursuing for positive changes;
- Finance distribution;
- Flexible adjustment to children's needs and time planning;
- Purposive career designing;
- Causes and analysis of career changes;
- Feeling of tension when combining parenthood and career;
- Continuous dialogue and considerations;
- Management of

Figure 1. Narrative analysis of the interviews with young families

222

The experience of Family P13 demonstrates their endeavour to reconcile family and career. At the same time the family seeks to navigate and adjust to work situations trying to keep professional level, as well as staying a full-fledged family member. However, this attempt to combine the family and career needs at the maximum is stripping them off personal free time and possibilities to improve according to their personal desires: *I try to navigate between being a good professional and a good dad. You struggle, though being professional depends not only on your efforts, but also on your abilities and talents. You try to keep the balance and make some achievements at work, as well as to cater all the family members to make them all feel good. You sacrifice your own personal time to improve and learn in order to contribute to the family welfare (Family P13: husband 32 yrs., wife 32 yrs., son 6 yrs., son 3yrs., daughter 4 months).*

The example of Family P2 illustrates those mothers who decide to have their children and study or work at the same time. They definitely experience inner conflict of multiple parallel roles being a mother, a student or an employee. Several mothers articulate their doubts of such earlier decisions and when analysing their experiences conclude that maybe they better had to say „no"and devote more time to the family: *I somehow managed to juggle my work, studies and growing a baby, but I compare myself to other mothers who do not study or work, but devote those 2 years (of maternal leave) only to a baby, they are happy, relaxed and enjoy so many things that I could not afford. I probably should have said „No"(Family P2: husband 36 yrs., wife 34 yrs., daughter 7 yrs.).*

Therefore, the major issues refer to work and family/family and work conflict (Carlso et al., 2000; Ahman, 2008), as well as role conflict, personal inner conflict and family activity adjustment conflict. Besides that it has been noticed that young parents quite often intend to change their workplace, however, due to the inner conflict related to fear of losing financial stability, they usually suspend the change of workplace till children are more grown up.

Employers' perspective

The analysis of interviews with the employers has revealed generally positive attitude towards employees with young children (see Table 4).

Table 4. The text analysis of the interviews with employers

Sub-category	Category	Main theme
Creation of flexible work schedule	Creation of family friendly environment for young families	Facilitation of favourable work conditions for young families
Type of activity is not favourable for schedule adjustments		
Leader's goodwill		
Expression of employees' needs		
Solution of emerging problems		
Supporting social relations		
Common family festivals and tours		
Formalization of agreements and decisions	Definition of formally regulated young family's situation	Review of young family's situation based on the social policy
Information provided by HR department and administration		
Officially undefined charter for young parents		
Regulations for maternity/paternity leave		
State support and taxes	State support	
Young family-partly-friendly or unfriendly work peculiarities	Coherence of work activities with young family needs	Coherence between career possibilities and work peculiarities
Family-friendly work peculiarities		
Focus on employee's abilities		
Internal culture of organization		
Formation of development possibilities and career		
Employer's possibilities to establish close-to-work settings for employees' child/children care	Employers' possibilities to contribute to various support forms for young families	Employers' position and search for solution for reconciliation of young employees' work and family needs
Collaboration among members of organization		
Work place unfitted for children		
Setting-up possibilities for employees to bring their child/children to workplace		

The employers most often discuss the issues related to allowances and validation of the needs of young families with the personnel office. The employers (E8, E9, E10, E13) state that they know the main aspects of giving allowances and additional days to young parents (mother's day and father's day) and coordinate these issues with their employees. They are trying to determine the needs of their employees and constantly inform them about the changes in the law system. A kindergarten establishment near the workplace could be considered as the most prominent initiative and support in order to help young families to get to work. District public limited company (E7) states that a kindergarten was established in the period of the project implementation. When looking for the opportunities of flexible work schedule, the employers say that such issues as employee's wishes and needs in regard to work schedules and future work results are discussed in the workplace. The school director (E5) states that they are trying not to plan morning classes when preparing the timetable or <...*to make some free day of the week, i.e. methodical day...*>. It is also notable that employers are willing to use various ICT tools in order to facilitate employees' situation when adjustments are to be made in the case of family problems related to a

child's illness (E10). This idea is supported by the head of the higher school department (E3) and the school director (E1) <...*we have favourable conditions at the school as we can regulate workloads, the number of classes and the timetable. If this is service staff, working hours can also be regulated according to their needs, e.g., if a husband has to work longer, we change the work hours so that it would be more convenient for a family to deal with their problems...>*. The employers also say that opportunities are created for young parents who have pre-school children to work part of the day. When discussing about support or help that employers' need in order to improve the quality of service, or support for young families who search for harmonization in this process, the employers expressed the potential need for external experts' support. Experts' consultations or even development of new work places would create the entire system assuring the help for young parents to accommodate new experiences, potential temporary challenges or difficulties through the transitional period.

Career counsellors' and human resource specialists' perspective
Career counsellors and human resource specialists are expected to be those facilitators who actively participate in the process of searching balance between family and work (see Table 5).

Table 5. Categorization of career counsellors' and human resource specialists' approach to facilitation of family and work reconciliation

Theme	Subtheme
Pressure experienced by employees with small children	Pressure because of child/ children illness
	Intimidation of announcing about pregnancy
	Pressure felt by policy of higher education institution because of studies continuation
	Family status and gender discrimination
Development of career counselling services	Students at higher education institutions do not know about possibilities to consult with experts
	Job centre counsellors' benevolent attitude to young families
	Support groups at workplace
	The need for trainings about family and career reconciliation
Recommendations provided by career counsellors to employees	Preparation of candidates seeking for a job presenting questions and arguments concerning children
	Identification of personal needs
	Willingness to stay away of a job market for as short time as possible
Keeping a consistent system/order determining child-care support during maternity/paternity leave and later	Need and support for permanent legal system concerning children care and grow
	Legal possibilities for more flexible work relations
	Regulations for establishment of children care-room or care-centre at workplace
	Development of mother-child and father-child friendly culture in organizations
	Provision of high quality and purposive information for employers

The focus group discussion with the experts in career counselling and human resources focuses on the specific problem. Firstly, many employees

do not even know that there are professionals who could help them in this precise situation, when help is needed in order to find a balance. Secondly, it is very often that young parents do not know the latest updates of state legislation where the question of family and career is discussed, as well as updates of job market strategies. The experts provide information that some young parents might not be aware of their rights not to answer questions related to family status during job interviews, as there are only competences that should be evaluated. Therefore, as research results demonstrate, career counsellors and human resource specialists must be deeply aware of how individual (work<->family identity), work (counsellor, supervisor and/or organization support) and family (spouse, dual-career, dual-earner couple) factors are related collaborating for family and work facilitation.

Conclusion

The interviews with young families where both partners (mother and father) were involved have distinguished that there is a big change in family models as nowadays most of parents feel more pressure to contribute actively to family welfare and child care and this implies bigger stress because of the transformation from "Me" to "Father" or "Mother". The time pressure is related with different roles being constantly applied at the same time adjusting own and children needs. However, the research analysis where both partners were participating in the interview highlighted the need and importance of continuous dialogue between parents about diverse roles they play, though unfortunately this appeared to be quite a challenging issue.

The present research shows that employers are positive about young families; they want to develop a dialogue with employees and support them. Perceived importance of executive support and positive sense of organization towards young family needs allow forecasting smaller conflict within a family. When young and having children employees see an executive as understanding and supportive person, and workplace as flexible and friendly surrounding, less conflict regarding to work and family reconciliation is experienced.

The given context emphasizes clear need for the involvement of career counsellors and human resource specialists into the process of work and family conflict facilitation. Experts professionally playing an advocacy role for young and working families should try and find possibilities for presenting flexible schedules or work forms. Experts may also act as agents for government funders and policy makers when discussion about community-based support, accessible day-care, health services, enhanced parental life and career service possibilities appear.

The following research stage, namely quantitative research on "Young families' work and family reconciliation" is going to refer the

themes covering work and family conflict according to three dimensions (time, strain, behaviour), role distribution, reconciliation of family needs and work activities, track and development of professional activities, young families' support measures and elements.

Acknowledgement

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