

## Maternity and professional life: The case of the female journey of students at a federal education institution



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### ABSTRACT

Today's women take care of the children, the house, work outside the home and in some cases, study, which is clearly something to be proud of, however,

being a mother can be a barrier in your professional life. The general objective of this study was to analyze the perception of students of the Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration of a federal educational institution about how motherhood affects professional life. Methodologically, a qualitative research of a descriptive nature was carried out using the case study method. This study used secondary data that consisted of the bibliographic research developed for the construction of the theoretical framework of the present study and the primary data was given through the application of a semi-structured questionnaire to 86 students of the Administration Course of a federal educational institution. In the results, most of the students answered that having children makes it difficult to carry out professional activities, however, those who are already mothers answered that it is possible to reconcile the maternity journey with studies. In fact, it is possible to reconcile motherhood with other activities, but for this to happen, some factors are necessary that can contribute to the permanence of these mothers in the labor market.

**Keywords:** Maternity, Professional life, Labor market.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

It has always been clear that women's role in society was to be mothers, housewives and wives, and for many years they were educated only to fulfill their role correctly. There are many films, series, documentaries and books that report this, where women did not have the right to study, work, go out, without their husbands allowing them, which almost never happened. It is only with the development of the economy that women begin to occupy a space that, until then, was intended for men. The modern woman takes care of the children, the house, works outside the home, and in some cases studies, which is clearly something to be proud of. However, being a mother can be a barrier in your professional life. Other indicators can contribute to a better understanding of the difficulties they face in entering the labor market. According to a survey released by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics



(IBGE, 2020), women in the age group between 25 and 49 years old who have children up to 3 years old living at home have an occupation in the market of 54.6%, below the 67.2% of those who do not.

In view of the above, the discussion on the theme of motherhood and professional life becomes relevant. In this sense, the problem of the present study consisted of answering the following guiding question: does motherhood affect the professional life of students of the Bachelor's Degree in Administration of a federal educational institution?

This study is justified by the current relevance of the theme, since, every day, women are even more inserted in the labor market, and to understand the real situation of the female working day, in the specific case of students. According to Prudêncio et al. (2014), women's work had its origin in a scenario of great discrimination. Over the years, through struggles and through the intervention of the State, women have been able to obtain rights that allow them to compete in the labor market in a position of greater equality with men.

It is notorious that women do not need to be mothers to suffer from the consequences of inequalities between them and men, which, according to Lima (2020), are reflected in the lack of political representation of women, which is historical and still remains today; wage inequality in relation to men doing the same work; statistics on violence against women; beauty standards; in the way of educating girls and boys; and in a number of other respects. However, the achievements are growing, and, compared to before, where the woman was educated to become a "good wife", today, working outside the home, studying to have a greater livelihood is a victory. Robeck (2020) says that the right to maternity protection is one of, if not the most, important conquered by women. They are the reproductive force of humanity and need to have guarantees around healthy motherhood. Therefore, women should be free to have children without losing their right to study and work

## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This section deals with the subject of women/mothers and domestic work and professional life.

### 2.1 WOMAN/MOTHER AND DOMESTIC WORK

The division of labor between men and women is historical, cultural, and religious in origin. As Barreto (2016) states, the unequal division of roles between the sexes is a sum of several elements that made women remain confined to domestic life, with the sole purpose of procreation and care for children. To men, they owed obedience and respect. The division of social roles between men and women became more evident between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. The man was responsible for providing for the household, working "outside"; and the woman, who is responsible for taking care of and educating the children and also for domestic chores (SOUZA *et al.*, 2019). According to Joan Scott, in her article "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis from 1995":



Undoubtedly, it is implied that social arrangements that require fathers to work and mothers to perform most child-rearing tasks structure the organization of the family. But the origin and the reasons why they are articulated in terms of a sexual division of labor are unclear. Nor is the issue of inequality discussed, as opposed to that of asymmetry (SCOTT, 1995, p. 81).

The differences between women exist and are manifested in a hierarchical system, full of inequalities (JULIÃO; DUTRA, 2020). The same authors also add, in general, that the sexual division of labor operates as a social division that highlights the hierarchy of men's work over women's work and the distinction between what is men's work and what is women's work. Thus, in addition to the historical, social and cultural context that women are inferior to men, there is also the separation of what belongs to men and what belongs to women.

Hirata (2002) argues that, in contrast to these recent trends in women's professional work, changes in domestic work are smaller and much slower. If the strong development of domestic technologies tended to facilitate these tasks, the sexual division of domestic labor and the attribution of the latter to women, in reality, remained intact. The traditional sexual division of labor recognizes that productive activities and functions with greater social value are part of a primarily male space, while reproductive activities, linked to the domestic and family sphere, are predominantly female. Thus, domestic and family responsibilities are the responsibility of women, and the role of provider is assigned to men (HIRATA; KERGOAT, 2007; HIRATA, 2010; ENGLAND, 2010; *apud* GUIGINSKI, 2015).

According to Hirata (2011), from the point of view of the transformations of the sexual division of labor, it can be said that such a process is quite important, because it points to a very large diversity of forms of work now.

## 2.2 WOMAN/MOTHER AND PROFESSIONAL LIFE

In past centuries, women were seen only through the aspect of domesticity, but the experience of work has changed the way of life of the female sex, enabling greater independence, autonomy and freedom (BARRETO, 2016). Many discussions have arisen around this new female gaze. It was questioned that women's participation in the labor market would put the essential tasks of their lives aside, thus harming the family structure, in addition to occupying a place that was previously male (SOUZA *et al.*, 2019).

This insertion in the labor market also influences how they see themselves, as financially independent people, who do not need to be trapped or submissive to their husbands, having much greater autonomy, which also directly reflects on how society sees them (SANTOS, 2020). Studies show that women's search for a job is often associated with a conquest of independence, not only financially and in relation to a male figure, but also freedom of choice and autonomy (SOUZA *et al.*,



2019).

According to Hirata (2005), women's activity continues to be concentrated in sectors such as personal services, health and education. However, the trend towards diversification of functions shows today a situation characterized by bipolarization: at one extreme, highly qualified professionals with good earnings (engineers, architects, doctors, teachers, managers, lawyers, magistrates, etc.), and, at the other, women with very low qualifications, low salaries and jobs without social recognition. In their study, Leone and Baltar (2008, p. 247) concluded that:

The consequences of the fact that women continue to be confined to occupations with less prestige and pay are even more evident precisely in those occupations where access is limited to people with secondary and higher education and, in this case, with as strong a presence of men as women, which shows the importance of differences by sex in the type of secondary and higher education. suggesting that discrimination already occurs in the education system prior to entry into the labor market.

In addition, women with higher incomes have the option of prioritizing the market journey, seeking a better quality insertion, better opportunities, higher positions and higher salaries (DEDECCA, 2009).

In addition to inequalities, women still face discrimination in the workplace. According to Robeck (2020), in the work environment, there are many prejudices formed around the institute of motherhood, which causes women to be discriminated against and lose many opportunities in relation to those offered to the male gender. Despite efforts by senior leadership, committee leaders, and affinity groups to change this perception of a woman's unique role as mothers, gender regimes already imposed on society play a relevant role in women's choices (BENDIA, 2020). According to Guiginski (2015), the performance of adult women in the labor market is differentiated in relation to the family composition in which they are inserted, being significantly affected by the presence of children. This is because children need the care of an adult, usually provided by the mother.

It is worth mentioning that women are affected, as well as companies, which lose out by not hiring them, since they give more importance to their professional training than most men. Thus, they stand out for having greater diversity and ability to perform multifunctional procedures (SILVEIRA; FLECK, 2017). Another obstacle in hiring mothers is maternity leave, according to Santos (2020, p. 35):

Although it is also a great achievement for women, the difference in days between maternity and paternity leaves, usually 120 and 5 days, respectively, also reveals a lot about how society still sees women as the ones who have the responsibility to take care of the children while the man must focus on work. One of the big reasons why many employers prefer to hire men over women is maternity leave.

Among the main obstacles faced by women in their professional lives are the lack of collective facilities; the lack of public policies that encourage women's full-time work; the existence, on the



contrary, of policies that encourage the inactivity of wives and their return to part-time work; and, perhaps most importantly, relationships (in the family, in the couple, in society) and social norms that continue to deny any legitimacy to the status of full-time workers and the possibility of a career to women who have the status of mothers (HIRATA, 1996 *apud* HIRATA; KERGOAT, 2007). A study conducted by Loureiro *et al.* (2012) found that the professional trajectory of these women is a construction punctuated by advances and setbacks in their quest to perform their work without renouncing feminine issues (such as motherhood), since these are not seen as excluding, but as complementary, since both are seen as a source of personal fulfillment. A study by Smeha and Calvano (2009, p. 207) pointed out that:

Profession is not a substitute for motherhood, just as it was not an obstacle to motherhood. The professional activity proved to occupy a parallel place, being a significant way of investment and search for completeness. The lack of motivation to motherhood was the most present and defining factor of their behaviors, and they did not seem immersed in a feeling of sadness or emptiness for the choice of that condition. In addition, they do not perceive motherhood as something inherent to the feminine identity.

A study conducted by Guedes *et al.* (2020) was able to offer knowledge in relation to the change in women's awareness of the idea of motherhood, in which, due to their insertion in the labor market and access to higher education, women did not have much interest in remaining restricted to motherhood. And, even with so many obstacles, it can be observed that contemporary women have expanded the range of role possibilities, taking on other functions far beyond domestic chores, with women entrepreneurs, occupying heads of multinationals and state representatives (SOUZA *et al.*, 2019). A study conducted by Losada and Rocha-Coutinho (2007, p. 493) points to the fact that:

If motherhood once defined a woman's life, now, despite being seen as essential for a woman's complete fulfillment, it no longer seems to be sufficient for her full personal satisfaction. Developing a professional activity is, for them, not only a source of livelihood, but, in particular, something extremely important in their lives, and which was also present in the projects and plans outlined by them. Thus, these two spheres of action, family and work, which, at first, seem mutually exclusive, end up being lived and assumed concomitantly in daily life, which has important consequences for the life of today's woman.

There are women who find other ways to stay active professionally; some mothers choose to leave their jobs and their financial security to become entrepreneurs. Thus, from motherhood, in addition to assuming the role of mother, many women also assume the role of entrepreneurs (CASTOLDI *et al.*, 2020). According to the Global *Entrepreneurship Monitor* (GEM) survey, conducted by Sebrae, half of the new entrepreneurs in Brazil are women (SEBRAE, 2019). A survey called "Who are they?", carried out by the Women Entrepreneur Network (RME, 2016), showed that 55% of these women are mothers, and 44% are heads of household. The same survey also says that 75% of these entrepreneurs decide to become entrepreneurs after having a child. Based on a study carried out on entrepreneurship by Lindo *et al.* (2007), it was found that these women consider flexible



working hours as a fundamental point for the harmonization of work and family demands.

Leone and Baltar (2008), in their study, reveal that women's participation has increased in both types of work (self-employment and self-employment), but the differences in income by sex remain very large. Despite the higher participation, women continue to be segregated into lower-income occupations, both in the labor market, both in the self-employed and self-employed ones. A study conducted by Chies (2010) points out some of the contradictions and paradoxes pertinent to this field of tension, referring to the fact that, even in the face of the evident insertion of women in the labor market, access to schooling and professional training, what still weighs on relationships is the issue of gender. The study by Hoffmann and Leone (2004, p. 35) showed that:

On the one hand, a decrease in the contribution of income from male labor and, on the other, an increase in the contribution of women's labor income, as well as income from retirement and pensions, to the inequality of the distribution of per capita household income. The increase in the contribution of women's labor income to inequality reflects, essentially, a strong increase in the proportion of this share in household income.

A study carried out by Silva *et al.* (2018) had as the largest difference observed regarding positions and income, with the majority in occupations with greater social and economic projection (board and management). As a result, they earn higher incomes, despite the fact that they are better educated, even when they occupy the same job. It is noteworthy that this constancy in the differences between men and women in the labor market demonstrates that there is much to be discussed, to propose transformations and to implement them with gradual changes (CHIES, 2010).

### 2.3 WOMEN'S JOURNEY AND THE MULTIPLICITY OF ROLES

According to a survey conducted by França and Schimansk (2009), women today are divided between old and new values. At the same time that they are encouraged to have a profession, they are charged with the responsibility for caring for their children. A study carried out by Oliveira and Traesel (2008) found that modern and ancient roles coexist and that contemporary cultural demands on women become increasingly complex, with strong impacts on their subjectivity. According to research conducted by Martins (2021), even with the progress of women and their empowerment, there are challenges to be faced by this group, which is strengthened, aware of its weaknesses and committed to positioning empowerment in the face of obstacles (MARTINS, 2021).

According to Batoni *et al.* (2021), when focusing on the issue of double shifts, we perceive, without difficulty, that it is a phenomenon linked to the persistence of female aspirations for conjugality and motherhood, which are added to the new searches for participation in the world of work and obtaining financial independence. The overload can increase when women follow the academic life, which configures the triple shift, and couples to the routine another difficult task, which requires dedication, concentration and a great ability to reconcile these three segments (COSTA, 2018).



According to Marques (2021, p. 59),

An individual who studies, works and has a family to care for reconciles the three shifts at the expense of his personal well-being, namely with the reduction of his time for self-care and dedicated to activities that give him pleasure, a fact that can influence his emotional and psychological well-being, fundamental for the execution of the remaining shifts. Therefore, four dimensions in the lives of these people should be considered, instead of the three presented so far.

A study conducted by Dedecca (2009) showed that women in less stable occupations, with lower qualifications, lower income and with younger children tend to have longer total working hours when compared to men in similar occupational and family situations and to women with more qualified occupations, with higher income and also with young children. In his study, Salgado (2019, p. 312) mentioned that:

The woman, even assuming the challenge of being the provider of the home, still brings with her remnants of all this macho culture where she was and is raised, because, although independent, most of the time, she does not give up the obligation to be a mother and experience motherhood, in many cases not as an obligation but as the fulfillment of a dream. But in other situations, it still happens to face the imposition of society, which even partially accepts their professional and financial independence, as long as motherhood is not abdicated. Thus, the woman is faced with a multiple and intense journey (mother, student, worker, housewife...). Managing this "multiple journey" with the requirement to be successful in all assignments is no easy task.

According to Reyes (2019), the results of her research reveal several realities in the relationship that women establish with the family, for example, the naturalization that a woman's place is in the home, taking care of her children and spouse. According to research conducted by Silva (2014, p. 17):

The women interviewed evidence, in their reports, their responsibilities and duties, sometimes to work, sometimes to studies, sometimes to children and husbands, without ceasing to question themselves about priorities, and this often generates anguish. According to reports, domestic activities and child care are still not shared equally between men and women, leaving them with a large part of this routine. However, it becomes apparent that, when the spouse is involved in these tasks, the woman feels insecure, because she still has the perception that this role should be hers, a role in which she cannot fail.

A study conducted by Salgado (2019) with mothers, workers, and students showed that, although the concept of quality of life is externally subjective and internally private, none of the interviewees are above 67.4% of good quality of life, considering that the closer to 100%, the greater satisfaction. Time was pointed out and affirmed as an objective factor that prevents students from becoming more involved with their area of training, in view of the daily workload and the condition of a night course (RASCHE, 1998).

Due to the current scenario in relation to motherhood and professional life, it was considered necessary and important to carry out a research on the relationship between professional life and students of a federal institution. The next section presented how the research was developed.



### 3 METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

This section addresses how this study was developed, specifically describing the type of research carried out and how data were collected, processed and analyzed.

#### 3.1 TYPE OF RESEARCH

The type of research chosen was qualitative research, due to the fact that, according to Taquette and Borges (2020), qualitative research aims to describe multiple realities, understand and seek meanings for visible and invisible issues. The authors also add that, in qualitative research, one does not seek to study the phenomenon itself in people's lives, but to understand the meaning attributed to it by people, both at the individual and collective levels. Qualitative research, by definition, is descriptive; therefore, the data are not reduced to variables, but generate themes that are observed and explored as a whole (CYRIACO, 2017). The present study is descriptive in nature, according to Manzato and Santos (2012) the descriptive study observes, records, analyzes and correlates facts or phenomena (variables) without manipulating them. It seeks to discover, as accurately as possible, the frequency with which a phenomenon occurs, its relation and connection with others, its nature and characteristics.

Bibliographic research was used to construct the theoretical framework. Raymundo (2020) says that bibliographic research is the basis of any scientific work, and adds that this step serves to gather the theoretical knowledge already available on the researched subject. The sources for the construction of the bibliographic research were specialized journals on the subject, such as articles by Julião and Dutra (2020); studies such as that of Robeck (2020), Souza *et al.* (2019) and IBGE surveys; dissertations and theses, such as Guiginski (2015). In addition, we used articles and books by Hirata (2002; 2005; 2007; 2010; 2011), a Brazilian philosopher specializing in the sociology of work and gender, and Scott (1995), a historian who studies women's history from a gender perspective.

In addition, the theoretical framework sought to present results of other studies and research on women/mothers and their reconciliation with professional life, such as Brito (2021), Gomes (2020), Costa (2018), Loureiro (2012), Reis (2020), Robeck (2020) and Reyes (2018).

This study is also characterized as a case study, since it specifically analyzed the opinion of women about motherhood and the professional life of students of the Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration of a federal educational institution. According to Manzato and Santos (2012), a case study is a research on a certain individual, family, group or community that is representative of their universe, in order to examine various aspects of their life.

#### 3.2 DATA COLLECTION, PROCESSING AND ANALYSIS

To obtain the data, a semi-structured questionnaire was used, consisting of closed (9) and open





(1) questions, totaling 10 questions. The questionnaire was divided into 2 blocks, and the Free and Informed Consent Form (ICF) was presented, containing information about the research and requesting agreement to participate in the study, before the first block that dealt with the questions about the characterization of these students, with information about: age, if they have children and how many, and which period you are attending. The second block dealt with questions about professional life.

A pre-test of the questionnaire was conducted. The pilot test was carried out with the application of the questionnaire to 4 students of higher education, two mothers and two students who do not have children. In this application, the time spent to make an average and put it in the Free and Informed Consent Form (ICF) was asked, as well as to verify the understanding of all questions or any doubts in filling out the questionnaire.

The database used was provided by the Department of Higher Education Courses of the researched institution, which has all the *e-mails* of the students enrolled in the Administration course, totaling 100. At first, the intention was to interview only the mothers who were students of the researched institution who performed professional activities. However, as the number was small and difficult to access, it was decided to interview all those enrolled in the Administration course, as a census. According to IBGE (2003, p.10), the word census comes from the Latin *census* and means "set of statistical data on the inhabitants of a city, province, state, nation". Census, in short, is defined as the measurement of specific characteristics of a universe of physical and social objects, verified in all the units or elements that make up such universe or population, terms that are more common in Statistics (SASS, 2012, p. 133).

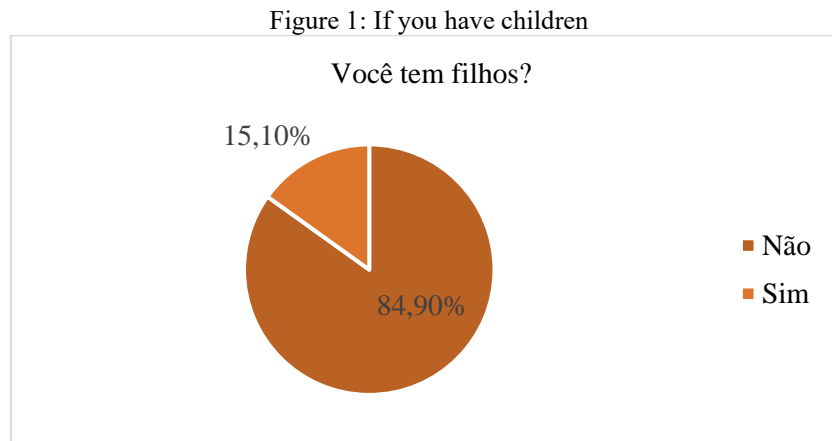
The questionnaire was created in *Google Forms*. Then, a link was generated to access the data collection instrument. The *questionnaire link* was sent by email to students enrolled in the Administration Course on 12/17/2021. New *e-mail messages were sent* on the 17th, 20th and 25th of the same month. In addition, *the* link to the questionnaire was also made available in the WhatsApp groups of the course classes. The questionnaire was open for responses from December 17, 2021 to January 27, 2022, totaling 41 days. A total of 86 respondents were obtained, representing 86% of the total population of students enrolled in the Course.

The closure of qualitative data collection does not occur due to statistical representativeness, but results from when the sample contains a representation of explanations that provide an understanding of the issue under study (CYRIACO, 2017). *Google Forms* itself generated a spreadsheet with the answers obtained, as well as graphs with the frequency obtained for each question. Data analysis was performed using the content analysis technique proposed by Bardin (2011), which is configured as a set of communication analysis techniques that make use of systematic and objective procedures to describe the content of messages.



#### 4 DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

The total number of respondents was 86 female students, and 84.9% (73) said they did not have children, and 15.1% (13) answered that they were mothers, as shown in Figure 1. Of the 15.1% of students who have children, 46.2% have 2 children and 53.8% have one child. There were no students who were mothers with more than two children.



Source: Survey data, 2022.

Thus, there is a tendency for more and more modern women to have fewer children than women of the past.

When asked whether, in addition to studying, they have a paid job, 82.6% answered yes, and 17.4% said no. Of these 82.6%, 60.6% are employees in companies, 11.3% have their own business (entrepreneurial), 11.3% do internships, 7% work informally, and 4.2% are public servants (Table 1).

Table 1: Paid Role

Function	Mother Students (%)	Students without children (%)	All students (%)
Female employee in a company	66,7	64	60,6
Own business	0	13,1	11,3
Internship	11,1	13,1	11,3
Works informally	22,2	4,9	7
Public Servant	0	4,9	4,2

Source: Survey data, 2022.

Both the majority of students who are mothers and the majority of those who do not have children are paid employees in companies. Entrepreneurial activity is common among mothers due to the ease of schedules; However, this was not the case of the students surveyed, where it was noticed that those without children are the ones who have their own businesses. There is also a notable percentage of mothers who work informally. However, informal work is not favorable when it reflects on labor rights. Women often occupy the majority of positions with the lowest pay and that resemble domestic services, often renouncing labor rights (VANNUCHI, 2010 *apud* REIS, 2020). According to



Law 11.770/2008, the employee is entitled to maternity leave for 180 days without losing her job and salary; However, a mother who works informally will have to go back to work sooner, as she has no guarantee of a salary without working. Another case is that of retirement, in which these mothers may be ceasing to contribute to the INSS and, thus, having to work even longer to be able to retire, running the risk of becoming even more vulnerable.

Regarding working hours, 70% work 44 hours a week, 12.9% work 30 hours a week, 7.1% work 20 hours a week, 7.1% do not have a fixed schedule, and 2.9% work 40 hours a week (Table 2).

Table 2: Weekly working hours

Workload	Mother Students (%)	Students without children (%)	All students (%)
44 hours	66,7	70,5	70
40 hours	0	3,3	2,9
30 hours	11,1	13,1	12,9
20 hours	11,1	6,6	7,1
There's no set time	11,1	6,5	7,1

Source: Survey data, 2022.

Most students have a workload of 44 hours in their professional activities, apart from domestic and academic activities. According to a study by Costa (2018), the performance of domestic tasks becomes a responsibility attributed almost exclusively to women, who, added to salaried work and, often, studies, characterize the double/triple work shift. The Administration course is at night, from 7 pm to 10:30 pm, 5 days a week, totaling a load of 17 hours and 30 minutes per week more. The same is repeated when analyzing the workload of those who are mothers. Regarding mothers who have children, Noor (2002) *apud* Lindo (2018) shows that women's working hours grow much more than men's, considering that working hours represent the sum of hours spent in formal employment and at home.

This burden also hinders women's professional and personal choices, penalizing them in the most basic rights of personal fulfillment. As an example, there is the discrimination they suffer on a daily basis in terms of access to the labor market and in the conditions of professional practice, in addition to hindering the conditions of families in the performance of their most important social functions, such as ensuring the integral monitoring of their children's growth (CRUZ, 2004 *apud* COSTA, 2011). Thus, an overload is observed in working women, especially in relation to those who have small children, due to the time consumed in their care (SILVA, 2014).

The student mothers were asked about who they leave their children with to carry out their professional activities, and most revealed that it is with family members (76.9%); followed by those who mentioned that they are alone (15.4%); and then with a nanny/maid (7.7%); and no mother marked the alternative of school or daycare. According to a study by Brito (2021), the need for a support network is associated with the planning, organization, and division of tasks that parents need to develop



to reconcile academic and personal issues. The author also adds that, apparently, in the trajectory of these students, this support network contributes to a better planning of the complex situation experienced, streamlining the time for studies, whether in the academic or home environment.

In her research, Gomes (2020) concluded that, in the face of the challenges, the support of the social support network - family, friends, professors, and religion - was essential for the permanence of these women and even for it to be possible to reconcile university life and motherhood. The reports collected in Loureiro's (2012) study point to the importance of husbands in the division of child care and domestic chores; or, in the case of separated executives, a family support network (notably, mother and father) that makes up for their absence, especially when traveling. Regarding nannies and maids, the author adds, mentioning that the "outsourcing" of domestic tasks through the help of maids and nannies is pointed out as necessary for the performance of women's work.

When asked about the meaning of work, 47.7% answered that work is the possibility of building a professional career; 17.4%, the work is a survival for me and I work outside the area I would like; 12.8%, the work is survival, however, I already work in the area I would like; 11.6% are not working or interning; for 9.3%, the job is just an extra income, not yet working in the area they would like; and 1.2% see work as a way to financial independence.

Table 3: Meaning of the job

	Mother Students (%)	Students without children (%)	All students (%)
I'm not working or interning	15,4	11	11,6
The job is a survival for me and I work outside the area I would like	46,1	12,3	17,4
The work is survival, however, I already work in the area I would like	7,7	13,7	12,8
The job is just an extra income and I don't work in the area I would like	7,7	9,6	9,3
Work is the possibility of building my professional career	23,1	52	47,7
Other	0	1,4	1,2

Source: Survey data, 2022.

Most students see work as a possibility to build their professional careers. When referring to mothers, almost half (46.1%) indicated that "work is a survival for me and I work outside the area I would like".

Regarding satisfaction, 54.7% answered that they are not satisfied with their professional life for reasons of not working in the area, being poorly paid and without recognition. On the other hand, 45.3% are satisfied with their professional life, like the work environment, have good pay and can work in the area.

When asked if they had ever thought about quitting their job, 53.5% answered no; 31.4% said yes; and 15.1% do not work or do an internship.



Table 4: Thinking about quitting the job/internship

Thinking about quitting the job/internship	Mother Students (%)	Students without children (%)	All students (%)
I don't work or do an internship	23,1	12,3	15,1
I didn't think about giving up	46,1	54,8	53,5
Yes	30,8	32,9	31,4

Source: Survey data, 2022.

Most of the respondents did not think about giving up the job/internship, which is the opposite when it comes to studies. This can be explained by Reis (2020), where the author presents that work has become a non-negotiable duty, even more so in low-income families, with studies being left in the background, and work is a source of income and studies is seen most of the time as something that can help increase the income acquired by work.

Among the respondents' reasons for quitting their job or internship, the following stand out: tiredness, salary, to be able to dedicate themselves to studies, lack of motivation and dissatisfaction.

Regarding the relationship between motherhood and professional life, 52.3% answered that the fact of having children makes it difficult to perform work or professional activities, 22.1% stated that it is possible to reconcile motherhood and work, 1.2% answered that it motivates them to perform professional activities, and 24.4% did not know how to give an opinion on the relationship between motherhood and professional life.

Table 5: Relationship between motherhood and working life

	Mother Students (%)	Students without children (%)	All students (%)
Having children makes it difficult to carry out work or professional activities	38,5	54,8	52,3
Motivates the performance of professional activities	7,7	0	1,2
It is possible to reconcile the working day of motherhood and work	46,1	17,8	22,1
I don't know how to give an opinion	7,7	27,4	24,4

Source: Survey data, 2022.

Most of the students who do not have children indicated "The fact of having children makes it difficult to carry out work or professional activities", and most of the mothers answered that "It is possible to reconcile the maternity and work workday". It is noted that students without children did not realize that the fact of having children can generate motivation to carry out professional activities, revealing that the fear of obstacles (the fact of having children) is greater for those who do not have them.

In fact, reconciling motherhood and professional life requires sacrifices. According to Costa (2018), in order for women to experience this reality of multitasking, the daily routine is a frantic rush to try to cope with all segments of work. The same author also adds that, today, women deal with what was thought impossible in the past: multitasking, being mothers, wives, widows who reconcile home



and work, even when the children are small, and thus weave the complex network of domestic, family and professional responsibility (COSTA, 2018).

The students were asked if they suffered any discrimination or bad jokes at work, during pregnancy, or after becoming mothers, or if they witnessed such situations. Of the respondents, 74.4% stated that they did not suffer discrimination or bad jokes at work, during pregnancy, or after becoming a mother, or witnessed such a situation, and 25.6% answered yes.

Table 6: If you have suffered any discrimination or bad jokes at work, during pregnancy, or after becoming a mother, or have witnessed such a situation

	Mother Students (%)	Students without children (%)	All students (%)
Yes	23,1	58,9	25,6
No	76,9	41,1	74,4

Source: Survey data, 2022.

Students who do not have children have suffered or witnessed more discrimination than those who are mothers. Some respondents spoke more about what happened, as shown in Chart 1 below.

Table 1: Reports of discrimination or bad jokes at work, during pregnancy, or after becoming a mother, or witnessed such a situation

Mother students	Students without children
<b>Respondent 23:</b> "I've done a lot of job interviews where I told about my son and I wasn't hired, when I omitted about being a mother they hired me."	<b>Respondent 4:</b> "I have witnessed situations in which, because of pregnancy, the work team complains about the development of the woman as a professional, claiming to be tired and unmotivated."
<b>Respondent 27:</b> "That when we get a child, life ends. But it was the gas I needed to pursue my dormant purposes. After I became a mother, my life changed, but it was for the better. And I never regret it."	<b>Respondent 19:</b> "I witnessed a situation of selection of candidates for an internship vacancy that, because I had a child, was discarded as an option."
<b>Respondent 37:</b> "My pregnancy made it difficult for me to work, which caused discrimination by my co-workers."	<b>Respondent 64:</b> "I worked at a company that preferred to hire men because they wouldn't have maternity leave."
	<b>Respondent 70:</b> "I have witnessed scenes in which the pregnant woman is diminished at work, as if being pregnant made her unfit to work."

Source: Survey data, 2022.

According to Robeck (2020), in the work environment, there are many prejudices formed around the institute of motherhood, which causes women to be discriminated against and lose many opportunities in relation to those offered to the male gender. Gender discrimination restricts women's access to spaces of power and originates in the roles assigned to men and women in the family, affecting work relationships and academic spaces themselves (REYES, 2018).



## 5 CONCLUSIONS

Of the 86 interviewees, 13 have children, ranging from 1 to 2 children. Both the majority of students who are mothers and the majority of those who do not have children are paid employees in companies.

Regarding the relationship between motherhood and professional life, it was possible to conclude that Most of the students who do not have children believe that the fact of having children makes it difficult to carry out work or professional activities, while those who are mothers answered that it is possible to reconcile the maternity and work hours. It is noted that students without children did not realize that the fact of having children can generate motivation to carry out professional activities, revealing that the fear of obstacles (the fact of having children) is greater for those who do not have them. In fact, reconciling motherhood and professional life requires sacrifices.

After analyzing the results of the research, it was understood that, according to the perception of the students of the Bachelor's Degree in Administration of a federal educational institution, motherhood affects their professional life, either by the answers presented or by their experiences in the labor market.

Finally, despite the change in the position of women in society and the resistance they have shown about crystallized gender relations, these relations have metamorphosed and still permeate the labor market so much, often determining women's choices. Therefore, it is necessary that society and women pay attention to the reproduction of gender relations, which, in essence, are power relations, and try to break this vicious circle.



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