

TYPES OF WORK-RELATED BEHAVIOR AND EXPERIENCES AND STRESS COPING STRATEGIES AMONG SINGLE MOTHERS AND MOTHERS IN RELATIONSHIPS DIFFERENTIATING ROLE OF WORK SATISFACTION

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Abstract

Objectives: The purpose of the study has been to describe functioning of single and mothers in relationships (married or in informal relationships) at work and verify if the declared degree of work satisfaction differentiates types of behavior at work and stress coping strategies in both groups of mothers. **Material and Methods:** The study was conducted on equal samples of single mothers (N = 186) and mothers from 2-parent families (N = 186) using Latack Coping Scale that measures work-related stress coping strategies, the AVEM (Arbeitsbezogenes Verhaltens- und Erlebensmuster – Work-Related Behavior and Experience Pattern) questionnaire, and a survey. It showed similarity between the studied groups in terms of the measured variables. **Results:** There were considerable differences between single and married mothers in terms of support seeking strategies. The interaction of work satisfaction and the type of motherhood significantly differentiates ($p = 0.03$) the avoidance strategy of resignation. **Conclusions:** That strategy of resignation was more frequently used by single mothers with lower work satisfaction, who were distinctly different from those whose work satisfaction was higher, and from the mothers in relationships (married or in informal relationships) (regardless of the level of their work satisfaction). Int J Occup Med Environ Health 2018;31(1):55–69

Key words:

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INTRODUCTION

Motherhood and employment are important aspects of each woman's life; they may, however, be a source of significant difficulties for single mothers. Observations and reports show that single mothers are less economically active than those who have partners. If they do take up work, it is to provide an additional contribution to the family's income [1]. The previously observed processes of changes in the role of women in the society have contributed to the change in the way they perceive the significance of work, which they now see as more important. Considering the above-mentioned factors an attempt has been made to analyze, from the point of view of work satisfaction, the work-related behavior and experiences as well as the work-related stress coping strategies employed by single and married mothers.

In the research conducted so far, the researchers capture factors that significantly impact work satisfaction. They include: the structure of the self (a high self-esteem is connected with work satisfaction), age, family life of the individual, and the social status [2]. In Poland, there has been no research on the role of work satisfaction in the case of single mothers; an overview of foreign literature has revealed materials that contain detailed descriptions of this issue [3].

Single motherhood in the work context

The issue of single parenthood is mostly perceived as a women's issue, as its occurrence is almost 10 times higher than single fatherhood [4]. Constant absence of one of the parents makes it necessary for the other to take roles that had been previously shared by both parents. They include instrumental as well as emotional roles [5]. Single mothers who do not have the husband's support have to combine work and family obligations, which means that they are under higher pressure and experience more stress in their daily life [3], which, in consequence, might lead to conflicts based on realization of tasks in these 2 spheres of life, more so than in the case of married mothers.

The modern changes in the role of women in the society and in family are the reasons why employment has become a more important value to a lot of women. Among young women work is beginning to compete with the value of family. It is especially true during the period of life when women want to realize their life goals. The following sequence: education – employment – establishing a good position in professional life – starting a family, is increasingly common [6]. In the case of employed women who have children, and thus follow the pattern of the so-called double role, there occurs a bigger risk of problems arising as a result of combining the professional and family life [7]. Shipley and Maria Coats in their research on single mothers and mothers from 2-parent families observed that the biggest stressor in their households was the issue of child care; it was especially noticeable in the case of mothers with low incomes [8]. Dianne Burden's results showed, however, that in comparison with mothers from 2-parent families, single mothers spent around 10 h/week less doing housework [9]. It might be caused by additional work they start to sustain their family. This leads to limiting their contact with their children, as well as reducing the number of opportunities to participate with their children in activities that develop such features as persistence, a positive attitude, or openness to experiences [10].

The argument that employment has positive effects on women is supported by the theory of multiple roles, which assumes that the more roles an individual fulfills in which they experience positive interaction with other individuals, the more it improves their mood and general well-being [11]. This occurs when the combined family and professional activities are in relative balance. In case, however, when fulfilling one role (e.g., that of an employee) becomes more difficult because of obligations connected to the other role (e.g., that of a parent), a conflict might occur [12]. The conflict between 2 roles appears when one does not have a sufficient amount of time to fulfill the expectations of both roles, when the stress caused by real-

izing one of them results in tiredness and has a negative effect on fulfilling the other one, and when one's behavior in one role is inconsistent with the behavior necessary to fulfill the other role [13].

Functioning at work

Behavior in the working environment reflects the employees' attitude towards their professional duties. It is not imposed by the employer nor by regulations. The individual behavioral pattern is created by the employee, who shares the responsibility for what happens in the working environment [14]. On the basis of the concept formulated by Antonovsky and Becker [15], and the concept of stress and coping with stress formulated by Lazarus and Folkman [16], Schaarschmidt and Fischer [17] created a model of types of behavior and experiences at work [14,18].

According to the assumption they propose, the way an individual functions in the working environment is determined by many different factors. An important role, aside from professional competences, is played by the attitude towards work, methods of coping with problems, and the emotional attitude towards the fulfilled professional role. The configuration of these factors determines efficiency of functioning in the workplace or lack thereof. It also allows to determine the patterns and types of behavior exhibited during work.

The types include: type G – Healthy and type S – Savings, as well as 2 types which may be described as risky: type A – Excessively burdened and type B – Burnt-out. Type G – Healthy is a type in which the individual is happy and has all predispositions necessary for personal and professional development. It is the type in which the individuals identify with the performed profession, which is for them a source of satisfaction and emotional well-being. Individuals who exhibit characteristics of this type more frequently cope with work-related problems by positive thinking, direct action, and help-seeking [19], and rarely display symptoms of mental disorder [20,21]. They are

characterized by possessing a higher level of personal resources: emotional intelligence [22,23] and the feeling of coherence [24–26]. They also have a higher level of work satisfaction than persons functioning according to type S – Savings, type A – Excessively burdened, and type B – Burnt-out. Similarly to employees representing type S – Savings, they experience a low level of stress during realization of work-related tasks [27].

Type S – Savings

The name of this type reflects the individual's attitude towards work. It is primarily characterized by a low sense of subjective importance of work, of professional ambition and readiness to spend energy, as well as lowered level of perfection at work. Both individuals functioning within type G – Healthy and within type S – Savings display a positive, healthy attitude towards work and more frequently possess "strong personality traits," according to the classification constructed by Peterson and Seligman [28,29]. Individuals functioning within type S – Savings more frequently cope with work-related problems by using the strategy of avoidance and resignation [19].

Type A – Excessively burdened

Employees who function within this pattern display a tendency to overly engage in work-related matters, assigning their work a high priority and realizing their tasks with a high level of perfectionism. Individuals who function within this type (similarly to those functioning within type G) apply positive thinking at work, act directly, and seek help, thus using strategies considered positive [19]. This way of functioning, however, creates a risk of somatic and mental health disorders [20,27], as it is characterized by a tendency to overly engage in professional matters.

Type B – Burnt-out

It is characterized by a very low sense of subjective importance of work, a decreased resilience to stress and,

simultaneously, a limited ability to distance oneself from experiences, a tendency to give up in difficult situations, and a very low sense of inner balance. Individuals functioning within type B – Burnt-out more frequently display somatic symptoms, anxiety, insomnia, as well as symptoms of depression [20,30]. They are in a worse physical condition [27] and they often display psychopathological symptoms [30]. Their most frequent method of coping with work-related problems are strategies of avoidance and resignation [19].

Work-related stress coping strategies

Every employee, regardless of position, salary, and profession, experiences stress at work. It impacts health and safety, and it affects the functioning of the company. Stress, understood as inadequate adjustment between an individual and the environment, may have numerous physical and psychological consequences. Ability to cope by adapting helps the employees to manage the stressors experienced at work and maintain good health. Effective methods of coping allow one to experience work satisfaction and to reduce anxiety and absence at work [31,32].

There exists no single, universal method of defeating stress, and the efficiency of the applied strategies relies on numerous factors, including ones that are determined by the circumstances as well as ones that depend on the individual's personality [26]. The more efficiently one copes with stress, the more adjusted they become; their social functioning is also more adequate, and they are in better somatic and mental health, which in consequence often means a higher level of work satisfaction.

Work satisfaction

Working environment may be considered from 2 points of view: as one that places on the individual demands connected with competences necessary to perform one's professional tasks, and as a source of gratification, allow-

ing the employee to fulfill needs and have expectations met. Work satisfaction appears as a result of compatibility between the gratifying factors and the employee's needs [33].

If we follow Zalewska's assumption [34,35] that work satisfaction is an attitude that contains the assessment of the degree to which the performed work is beneficial or disadvantageous for a specific individual, expressed in affective reactions and cognitive assessments – we will touch on the cognitive aspect of happiness at work, known as work satisfaction. The emotional aspect – the emotional assessment of work – is known as mood in the workplace [35]. These definitions emphasize the personal character of work satisfaction, considering the individual assessment of working conditions to be the most important factor, and focusing on the employee's mental well-being.

It is commonly accepted that employment has, in general, positive influence on an individual [36]. However, performing different roles in an efficient manner depends on numerous factors. The most frequently emphasized of these factors include work and family support, age, marital status, type and model of the relationship the individual is in, and the number of children [37,38].

In Poland, every 5th family is a single-parent (usually single mother) unit; this means there is a strong need to examine the phenomenon of single parenthood in order to gain a deeper understanding of this issue. Analysis of the literature shows that, until now, no research has been conducted on the subject of the way in which single mothers function at work. Similar studies that have been conducted so far focused on women in general, without differentiating according to family structure.

The main purpose of the study has been to determine if the declared level of work satisfaction differentiates types of behavior and experiences at work and stress coping strategies among single mothers, in comparison with mothers in relationships. It has been examined if there are differences between single and married mothers in terms

of functioning at work, expressed in types and experiences in the workplace, as well as in terms of the applied stress coping strategies. It may be assumed that work satisfaction contributes considerably to differentiation of functioning in the workplace in terms of types of behavior and experiences at work, and in terms of stress coping strategies among single mothers. Differences in types of behavior and work experiences, and differences in stress coping strategies may also be expected to emerge between single mothers and those in relationships.

The following hypotheses have been formulated:

1. There are considerable differences between single mothers and mothers in relationships (married or in informal relationships) in terms of work-related stress coping strategies, in terms of types of behavior and experiences at work, and in terms of work satisfaction.
2. Work satisfaction significantly correlates with stress coping strategies and with types of behavior and experiences at work. These correlations differ in both studied groups (single and married mothers).
3. Work satisfaction significantly differentiates types of behavior and experiences at work, as well as stress coping strategies. It is expected that the character of these differences will be different in the case of single mothers and in the case of mothers in relationships.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The Work-Related Behavior and Experience Pattern (Arbeitsbezogenes Verhaltens- und Erlebensmuster – AVEM) [17] was used in this study to measure work-related stress coping strategies; a questionnaire (a 7-item Likert scale) comprised of questions about age, employment history, and work satisfaction of the participant of the study.

The Work-Related Behavior and Experience Pattern (AVEM), created by Schaarschmidt and Fischer, was designed to determine an individual's behavior in the professional environment in terms of dealing with work-related problems. Using the questionnaire allows to de-

termine the behavior and experiences of the participants of the study in 3 areas in which they function – professional involvement, mental resilience, coping strategies in problematic situations, and the emotional attitude towards work. Rongińska modified the tool to be compatible with the Polish condition [14]. The AVEM scale is known for its high accuracy: the internal consistency was from 0.71 to 0.84 when measured with Cronbach's α , and from 0.70 to 0.83 when measured with the Spearman-Brown split-half formula. The Polish standardization was performed on a sample of 616 people who represented various professions involving contact with people [14,39]. The questionnaire contains 66 statements that the participant of the study evaluates using a 5-item scale, according to their own feelings and experiences. Calculation of the results is performed by a computer program that simultaneously provides values for the types of work-related behavior: G, S, A, and B. The higher the value, the bigger the individual's tendency to function according to a given behavior pattern. The value of the sum of these types equals one [14].

The obtained results allow to determine experiences and behavior of individuals in 3 areas of functioning, the configurations of which form 4 types of work-related behavior (G, S, A, and B). They describe elements which shape each of these areas, and which include [14,18,30]:

1. Professional involvement, which consists of: a) subjective importance of work in the person's life, b) professional ambition expressed in a constant need of professional development, c) readiness to become involved in realization of work-related tasks, d) striving for excellence, that is precision and responsibility in performing tasks, e) ability to maintain distance to one's professional life after work and to relax.
2. Mental resilience and strategies of coping with difficult situations, which include: a) a tendency to capitulate when faced with lack of success; in other words: ability to accept failures, b) an offensive strategy towards

solving problems, that is, an optimistic attitude towards challenges and professional duties, c) inner peace and balance giving a sense of stability and emotional comfort.

3. The emotional attitude to work, which is comprised of: a) a sense of being successful in one's profession, that is, a sense of professional achievement, b) general happiness in life, c) feeling supported by the closest environment. The strategies of coping with work-related problems were analyzed using the Latack Coping Scale developed by Latack, adapted to the Polish conditions by Basińska [39]. The scale measures 5 strategies of coping with work-related problems:

- avoidance/resignation,
- positive thinking,
- direct action,
- help-seeking,
- alcohol use.

The adaptation of the scale to the Polish conditions involved translating it by 2 independent translators. One of these translations was made by a bilingual translator of Polish origin who, like the creator of the scale, lives in Canada, and the other by a Polish translator of English. The translation was then proofread by a psychologist fluent in the English language. This version was used on a sample of 506 people. Cronbach's α for the full scale was 0.72, and split-half reliability equaled 0.74. Cronbach's α results for separate scales were as follows: scale 1 = 0.61, scale 2 = 0.63, scale 4 = 0.56, and scale 5 = 0.87.

These results were similar to the ones obtained by the creator of the scale [31,32]. As correlation of the questions with the scales (with significance level of $p < 0.001$) proved to be insufficient for questions 12, 16, and 22, the questions were reformulated. The remaining questions showed correlation with their scales above 0.5 and the level of their statistical significance was 0.001. Another study on a sample of 1120 nurses showed a similar reliability of the scales: scale 1 = 0.69, scale 2 = 0.74, scale 3 = 0.78,

scale 4 = 0.62, scale 5 = 0.62. The correlations between the questions and the scales were sufficient.

Studied sample

The sample included 372 working mothers, 234 (63%) of whom had secondary education, and the remaining participants had higher education ($N = 138$, 37%). A half of the participants ($N = 186$) were married ($N = 172$, 46%) or in informal relationships ($N = 14$, 4%); the remaining ones were single ($N = 186$) for various reasons (never married: $N = 19$, 5%; divorced: $N = 120$, 32%; widows: $N = 38$, 10%; separated: $N = 9$, 3%).

The average age of the participants was 44.49 years old (standard deviation (SD) = 7.96). The youngest participant was 24, and the oldest was 61 years old. All women in the sample were mothers; the majority had 1 or 2 children, and a significantly smaller number had 3–5 children. Nearly a half of the single mothers ($N = 88$, 47%) had 1 child, and the remaining ones had 2 ($N = 69$, 37%) or more ($N = 29$, 16%) children. Among mothers in relationships (married or in informal relationships) more than a half had 2 children ($N = 103$, 55%); the remaining participants in that group had 1 child ($N = 48$, 26%) or 3 children and more ($N = 35$, 19%).

All the participants of the study worked as nurses. Their average job tenure was 22.74 years (SD = 8.88) for a span of 1 year to 41 years.

The research was conducted using the snowball sampling technique among nurses working in hospitals and clinics in the following provinces: Kuyavian-Pomeranian, Masovian, Warmian-Masurian, and Pomeranian. Each of the participants of the study was able to withdraw at any time without any consequences.

RESULTS

The purpose of the study has been to describe single mothers' functioning at work; for this reason the first stage of the study was to determine if there were differences be-

tween the groups of single and married mothers in terms of the analyzed variables. The majority of variables were analyzed using the Student's t-test, and the 3 scales: seeking support scale, life satisfaction scale, and type G – Healthy were analyzed using the nonparametric Mann-Whitney U test, due to lack of homogeneity of variance. The women who took part in the study, regardless of their social status, were similar in terms of functioning at work. Significant statistical differences were observed in the area of one of the elements of the emotional attitude towards

work: life happiness ($z = -4.15, p < 0.0001$), and in application of the support seeking strategies. Single mothers have a lower level of life satisfaction and they less frequently seek support in order to cope with stress at work than mothers in relationships. No significant statistical differences were observed in the areas of types of work-related experiences and behavior, and in terms of the work-related stress coping strategies they use (Table 1 and 2). Both studied groups of women are similar in terms of work satisfaction and they display an average level of

Table 1. Type of work-related behavior and experiences at work in the studied groups of working mothers

Dimension	AVEM scale [14,38] [pts]					
	single mothers (N = 186)			mothers in relationship* (N = 186)		
	M	SD	centiles	M	SD	centiles
Professional involvement						
subjective importance of work	16.25	4.94	41.33	16.72	4.35	42.82
career ambitions	18.37	4.26	32.05	18.46	4.02	32.62
readiness to become involved	18.55	3.80	32.85	18.67	4.18	33.55
striving for perfection	21.54	4.73	35.32	21.98	5.01	39.49
ability to distance oneself	20.47	5.27	64.50	20.17	5.11	64.13
Mental resilience and strategies for dealing with problematic situations						
tendency to give up when faced with failure	16.17	4.77	49.06	16.05	4.70	49.11
offensive problem-solving strategy	21.04	4.56	46.56	21.38	4.84	48.22
inner calm and balance	19.09	3.92	41.58	19.55	4.66	44.98
Emotional attitude towards work						
sense of professional success	18.60	4.06	32.12	18.76	4.06	33.30
life satisfaction	19.02	3.75	34.73	20.66	4.34	47.09
sense of social support	19.33	4.19	49.10	19.76	4.84	52.44
Types of behaviour at work						
type G – Healthy	0.15	0.26		0.22	0.33	
type S – Savings	0.26	0.32		0.24	0.33	
type A – Excessively burdened	0.21	0.29		0.20	0.29	
type B – Burnt-out	0.39	0.36		0.34	0.38	

AVEM – Arbeitsbezogenes Verhaltens- und Erlebensmuster (Work-Related Behavior and Experience Pattern) [14,38].

* Including: married (N = 172) and in informal relationship (N = 14).

Table 2. Differences between stress coping strategies in the studied groups of working mothers

Work-related stress coping strategy	Latack Coping Scale [39] [pts]				t/z	p
	single mothers (N = 186)		mothers in relationship* (N = 186)			
	M	SD	M	SD		
Avoidance/resignation	18.72	4.44	18.35	3.92	0.842	0.401
Positive thinking	20.78	3.94	20.71	4.12	0.180	0.857
Direct action	21.72	3.81	22.33	3.91	-1.544	0.123
Help-seeking	19.14	4.45	20.28	3.76	-2.760 ^z	0.006
Alcohol use	2.99	1.42	3.15	1.57	-1.003	0.316

* Including: married (N = 172) and in informal relationship (N = 14).
t/z – Student's t-test/Mann-Whitney U test.

work satisfaction ($M_{SM} = 4.52$, $M_{MZ} = 4.61$, $t = -0.654$; not statistically significant).

Work satisfaction among mothers participating in the study, types of work-related behavior and experiences, and work-related stress coping strategies

In order to verify the second hypothesis, focusing on the relationship between work satisfaction and work-related behavior and experiences, and work-related stress coping strategies in both studied groups (single mothers and mothers in relationships), Spearman's rank correlation test was employed as the majority of the analyzed variables did not have normal distribution. A statistically significant relationship between the declared work satisfaction and stress coping strategies, and work-related behavior and experiences has been observed (Table 3).

A similar number of connections between the analyzed aspects of functioning at work and work satisfaction in both studied groups of mothers has been observed. In both studied groups positive correlation has been observed between type G – Healthy and help-seeking strategy, the subjective importance of work, offensive problem-solving strategies, a sense of professional success, and life satisfaction; a negative correlation has been observed between type B – Burnt-out and work satisfaction. Regardless of the type of motherhood, being more satisfied with one's

work is connected with increased willingness to cope with problems by seeking help, and the individuals perceive their work as more subjectively important. They more frequently use offensive help-seeking strategies, have a bigger sense of professional success, and an increased level of life satisfaction. They also more frequently function at work according to the type G – Healthy pattern, and less frequently exhibit the type B – Burnt-out characteristics. Moreover, a negative correlation with the avoidance/resignation strategy and with the type S – Savings has been observed among single mothers. A positive correlation with readiness to become involved has been observed among mothers in relationships. Single mothers who display higher work satisfaction less frequently apply the avoidance/resignation strategy and less frequently function according to type S – Savings. Mothers in relationships who are characterized by higher work satisfaction display increased readiness to become involved in professional issues.

Types of work-related behavior and experiences and work-related stress coping strategies in the context of work satisfaction and the type of motherhood in the studied sample. In order to verify if the declared level of work satisfaction creates differences between types of work-related behavior and experiences and work-related stress coping strate-

Table 3. Correlation indicators between the declared work satisfaction and stress coping strategies, as well as types of work-related behavior and experiences in the studied groups of working mothers

Dimension	Work satisfaction			
	single mothers (N = 186)		mothers in relationship* (N = 186)	
	R	p	R	p
Work-related stress coping strategy¹				
avoidance/resignation	-0.289	0.001	0.000	0.999
positive thinking	-0.089	0.229	0.055	0.454
direct action	0.098	0.186	0.138	0.060
help-seeking	0.227	0.002	0.194	0.008
alcohol use	-0.027	0.713	-0.141	0.056
Professional involvement²				
subjective importance of work	0.256	0.001	0.156	0.034
career ambitions	0.106	0.149	0.084	0.254
readiness to become involved	0.039	0.601	0.147	0.045
striving for perfection	0.052	0.482	0.067	0.367
ability to distance oneself	-0.083	0.259	0.104	0.160
Mental resilience and strategies of coping with problematic situations²				
tendency to give up when faced with failure	-0.100	0.174	-0.108	0.145
offensive problem-solving strategy	0.195	0.008	0.209	0.004
inner calm and balance	0.116	0.113	0.123	0.096
Emotional attitude to work²				
sense of professional success	0.201	0.006	0.195	0.008
life satisfaction	0.159	0.030	0.244	0.001
sense of social support	0.138	0.060	0.106	0.149
Types of behavior at work²				
type G – Healthy	0.223	0.002	0.239	0.001
type S – Savings	-0.189	0.010	0.019	0.798
type A – Excessively burdened	0.090	0.220	0.003	0.966
type B – Burnt-out	-0.239	0.001	-0.236	0.001

¹ Latack Coping Scale [39].² AVEM (Arbeitsbezogenes Verhaltens- und Erlebensmuster – Work-Related Behavior and Experience Pattern) scale [14,38].

* Including: married (N = 172) and in informal relationship (N = 14).

gies among single mothers in comparison with mothers in relationships, an analysis of variance for factorial designs, despite lack of regular distribution for the variable elements, has been performed.

It has been based on the assumption that if the count of n per cell is high enough, then the deviations from the normal distribution are not important because of the Central Limit Theorem, according to which the distribution

Table 4. Variance for the factorial designs – dimensions of professional functioning vs. the declared life satisfaction and the type of motherhood in the studied groups of working mothers (single and in relationship)

Dimension	F	p
Professional involvement ¹		
subjective importance of work	1.313	0.270
career ambitions	0.136	0.873
readiness to become involved	1.834	0.161
striving for perfection	1.084	0.339
ability to distance oneself	0.962	0.383
Mental resilience and strategies of coping with problematic situations ¹		
tendency to give up when faced with failure	0.938	0.392
offensive problem solving strategy	1.187	0.306
inner calm and balance	1.440	0.238
Emotional attitude to work ¹		
sense of professional success	0.293	0.746
life satisfaction	1.467	0.232
a sense of social support	1.584	0.206
Types of behavior at work ¹		
type G – Healthy	0.620	0.537
type S – Savings	1.098	0.335
type A – Excessively burdened	0.311	0.733
type B – Burnt-out	0.873	0.419
Work-related stress coping strategies ²		
avoidance/resignation	7.295	0.001
positive thinking	1.382	0.252
direct action	2.016	0.135
help-seeking	0.318	0.728
alcohol use	1.257	0.286

¹ The AVEM Scale [14,38].

² Latack Coping Scale [39].

of the mean approaches the normal distribution, regardless of the distribution of the variable in the population (Table 4). Interaction of work satisfaction and the type of motherhood together differentiate only one strategy of coping with work-related stress: the avoidance/resignation strategy. It is most frequently used by mothers with lower level of work satisfaction ($M = 21.43$); there is a significant difference between them and single mothers whose

level of work satisfaction is higher, and between them and all mothers in relationships, regardless of their level of work satisfaction. However, at $\eta^2 = 0.038$, the size of this effect is weak.

Work satisfaction was the only factor that played a differentiating role for direct action strategy, type G – Healthy, type B – Burnt-out, subjective importance of work, tendency to give up when faced with failure, offensive strate-

gies of solving problems, a sense of professional success, and a sense of social support.

Each of the variables was an independently differentiating factor for help-seeking strategy and for life satisfaction; they did not, however, differentiate its intensity in interaction. The remaining dimensions of functioning at work were not differentiated either by the level of the declared work satisfaction, nor by the type of motherhood.

DISCUSSION

The results of the study show that effective fulfillment of professional and family obligations depends on numerous factors. The major ones include support of the professional environment, family support, age, the length of marriage, type and model of relationship, and the number of children [37,38]. Professional activity contributes both to increased well-being and a sense of achievement for mothers, but it is also the source of a sense of overburdening by the family and professional roles [40].

The obtained results allow to verify the 3 formulated hypotheses. The first one expresses the expectation that single mothers significantly differ from mothers in relationships in terms of work-related stress coping strategies, types of work-related experiences and behavior, and work satisfaction. The results of the study partly confirm this hypothesis. In comparison with mothers in relationships, single mothers experience a lower level of life satisfaction and use help-seeking strategies to cope with work-related stress with considerably lower frequency (Table 1 and 2).

Life satisfaction relies upon numerous factors, including the current experiences of the individual. Being active in both the professional and the family role without support from a partner is a difficult and burdening experience [12], thus possibly leading to lowered life satisfaction. Single mothers most probably acquire an increased ability to cope with difficult situations by themselves, which they transfer into their work environment. In terms of work sat-

isfaction, the mothers who participated in the study were similar to each other.

The study is consistent with the results described in the literature; it confirms and elaborates on the results of the previous studies that indicate that there are few differences between single and married mothers [3]. It is possible that mothers rely on their families as an alternative source of satisfaction, which causes them to perceive work-related problems as much less serious [41]. Women with no children are less satisfied at work than mothers [41], and low income, as well as insufficient social support may be additional and significant stressors, as indicated by the results of the recent research [42]. The difference is that the problems and joys connected with raising children distract mothers from problems at work and direct it towards family. In general, presence of children in the family increases the psychological well-being of the mother [43].

The second hypothesis has proposed that professional satisfaction considerably correlates with stress coping strategies and work-related experiences and behavior, and that these correlations differ depending on the mothers' family structures, which has been partly confirmed (Table 3). It has been observed that there exists a comparable number of factors facilitating the increase of professional satisfaction in both groups of mothers, even though the character of these factors is not identical. These results suggest that work satisfaction for both single mothers and mothers in relationships is significantly connected with functioning at work according to the type G – Healthy. For single mothers, however, professional satisfaction is negatively influenced by using the avoidance/resignation strategy and by functioning at work according to type S – Savings. The experienced work satisfaction, in a sense, protects all mothers from the sense of professional burnout.

The last hypothesis has assumed that the level of work satisfaction (low, average, or high) significantly differentiates types of work-related behavior and experiences and stress coping strategies. It is expected that the

character of these differences will be different in both studied groups. The interaction of work satisfaction and the type of motherhood (single or in a relationship) differentiate only one work-related stress coping strategy, one of avoidance/resignation (Table 4). This strategy was the most frequently used by single mothers with a lower level of work satisfaction, who significantly differed from mothers whose work satisfaction was higher and from all mothers in relationships, regardless of the level of their work satisfaction.

The strategy of avoidance/resignation is not beneficial from the point of view of efficiency. It involves avoiding stressful situations, “looking away” to protect one’s mental health, and not allowing every encountered stressor to affect one’s emotional balance [44]. Its purpose is to wait out a difficult situation, hoping that the problem will somehow solve itself. If we classify work satisfaction and having a full family as psychological resources, we will notice that women who do not possess these resources use the ineffective avoidance/resignation strategy of coping with problems. It might mean that it is most likely with this strategy that single mothers protect themselves against loss of energy, saving it for activities connected with the housework.

CONCLUSIONS

The obtained results show that the type of motherhood differentiates women’s functioning at work in terms of life satisfaction and help-seeking in coping with work-related stress only to small extent. The results obtained by single mothers are lower in these aspects than those of mothers in relationships’.

In terms of work satisfaction, both groups of women are similar and they are characterized by an average level of work satisfaction. Work satisfaction considerably correlates with stress coping strategies and types of work-related behavior and experiences; these correlations are similar in both studied groups of mothers (single moth-

ers and mothers in relationships). The differences are connected with the avoidance/resignation strategy, the type S – Savings, and the readiness to become involved in the professional matters. In the groups of single mothers, the increase of work satisfaction coincides with the decrease of the uninvolved attitudes (less frequent use of the avoidance/resignation strategy and functioning according to the type S – Savings). Among mothers in relationships, however, the increase of work satisfaction coincides with increased involvement in professional issues.

Interaction of work satisfaction and the type of motherhood together differentiate only one work-related stress coping strategy: the one of avoidance/resignation. This strategy is most frequently used by single mothers whose work satisfaction is lower, and who significantly differ from single mothers with higher work satisfaction, as well as from all mothers in relationships, regardless of the level of their work satisfaction.

To conclude, employers who employ single mothers should not fear that their family situation will transfer to their performance at work.

Practical implications

There is an increasing number of nurses who are single mothers, who will work better in independent management positions and will seldom seek help in solving problems. They might attempt to solve their problems by themselves, which might require a discreet form of control from the employer. Employers should not avoid hiring single mothers, and they should not fear that their situation will affect their professional life.

Limitations of the research

The results of the study cannot be applied to other professions; it is caused by the lack of homogeneity among single mothers as far as the causes of their single motherhood are concerned. These causes may be controlled in future studies.

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