

Women who belong to the Elite in Hungary- The features of elite Identity in Women's Elite Groups

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Abstract

The study represents the women's situation who belong to the cultural, economic and political elite in Hungary, according to the differences between women and men elite groups on the one hand and on the other hand, according to elite type differences of women's elite groups. In the analysis, we seek to the answer for the question of "can the Hungarian women elite group fulfil its elite profession and how powerful consciousness of elite has according to its self-classification?". All these significantly correlated to the acceptance or rejection of social values that the women consider to be important (solidarity, security, equality). Particularly important connection appears along on the value axes of conservative-liberal and right-left wings compared to the men included in the elite and within the woman's group. Overall, we can say that the Hungarian women's elite cannot meet the classical role of elite or fulfil the criteria of the elite profession in accordance with the notion of elite.

Keywords: Women, Economic Elite, Cultural Elite, Political Elite, Elite Consciousness

Introduction

This study represents specific features of elite groups based on quantitative research on elite in Hungary between 2009 and 2010. Our study is mainly descriptive and the presentation of the results are based on a sample containing 1365 people and are representative regarding gender, age and type of elite. The distribution of the total sample shows significant male predominance. 83% of it is male and 17% is the proportion of female: the female sub-sample contains 224 cases. According to the age distribution, the 70% of the total sample is older than 50 years. Within the sample, the internal proportion of elite types shows balance, 33% of them belongs to economic elite, 37% of them belongs to cultural elite, while 30 % of them are in the political elite. Due to the topic is unexplored, the analysis describes the situation of the women belonging to the elite based on the internal proportion and disproportion and then we complete it with results of multivariate analysis as much as possible due to the variables. The description – in the majority of the cases – is made up statistically verifiable

correlations; their absence is indicated in the evaluation every time. One of the key questions in elite sociology is the examination of the homogeneity and heterogeneity in the uppermost class. These analyses can be made not only on the personal skills, power relationships and positional-structural orientations but on the difference between genders regarding meanings. This study primarily presents and analyses the features of the Hungarian elite women's value, view of taking state role and views on the basis of the criteria above.

1. Age characteristics, educational qualification of family characteristics

Age group characteristics

Examining the age characteristics, it can be told that the women in elite are usually belong to the generation over 50. The youngest ones are mostly in the economic elite and the oldest ones are mostly in the cultural elite. Presumably, it is because the differences in dynamics and institutional characteristics of each sectors regarding career and career opportunities. In the political, cultural elite groups the young generation of women (under 40) is typically missing so it is the young middle generation (40-49 years old) which assume significant discrimination by age and gender in the operation of the institutional systems. In other words, while from the world of economic elite, the older women's generation is missing, from the world of cultural and political groups the younger women's generation is missing. This unbalanced elite structure in terms of age and gender strongly questions the effectiveness of the elite women reproduction mechanism.

For the young woman's generation, the entry into cultural and political elite seems to be the most difficult aim; one of its practical consequences is the lack of the middle generation. It can be explained by the traditionally closed nature of the political and scientific institutions, through the mechanism of the age discrimination against the youth and the gender discrimination against women. In these two elite groups, the replacement of female elite is slower. At the same time, the male predominance in political and scientific institution has great influence on the women's small participation opportunities which induce the exclusion on the basis of gender and age. Summarizing the age characteristics, most of the elite women belong to the generation of over 50. The youngest ones are mostly in the economic elite and the oldest ones are mostly in the cultural elite. Presumably, it is because the differences in dynamics and institutional characteristics of each sectors regarding career and career opportunities. In the political, cultural elite groups the young generations of women (under 40) is typically missing so is the young middle generation (40-49 years old) which assume significant discrimination by age and gender in the operation of the institutional systems. In other words, while from the world of economic elite, the older women's generation is missing, from the world of cultural and political elite the younger women's generation is missing. This unbalanced elite structure of age and gender strongly questions the effectiveness of the elite women reproduction mechanism.

Education

The examination of education shows significant differences as for the elite types. The examination of each elite type's educational level shows significant differences. In terms of university degree, the economic elite has considerable lagging behind – among the women elite groups, the cultural (68,4%) and political (68,3%) elite have the highest level of education.

The social trends prevail in the women's career paths and have influence on them since it is known that after the political transformation, the mobility upward is mainly connected to college level degree (mainly until the middle 90's). One of the main reasons was the

appreciation of business, IT and financial qualifications and women were overrepresented regarding getting degree in economic-science college. Later, it was easier to succeed in these fields with university degree. According to our data this type of social trend influenced and affected the women's situation in economic elite, that is, probably the most of the elite women started to build their career in the period when the acquisition special expert skill was only possible in collage primarily. As for the proportion of academic degrees, it was the largest in the cultural elite group as it was expected, however, it is surprisingly small (8,4%). In case of men, the proportion is always significantly bigger than the women's in each elite type. Their advantage is especially bigger in the cultural elite group – where their proportion is 26,4% compared to the women's 8,4% proportion. 10% difference is also significant in the political elite group.

Family characteristics

The most of the elite women are in relationship, they are especially married (but typically less of them than the men). However, the proportion of single women cannot be ignored. Almost all the men live in marriage, while it cannot be told the same about the women at all. There is a significant proportion of those who live in cohabiting partnership among the women and they produce the most of the divorced member in the elite world. Divorce typically occurs in the economic elite group which assumes particular, elite-specific personal life problems. We can conclude that the characteristics of women's relationship (private life) are significantly different from those of men; they are less traditional or traditional follower. We can presume that one of the reason is that the women much more willing to accept or prefer modern, alternative forms of cohabitation than men, but at the same time the partnership instability within the family can be the consequence of turning back at the traditional social role of woman.

2. Elite identity and class consciousness

In this section we examine the elite consciousness and self-classification regarding social class of Hungarian elite women. We can say that their value judgement about their own social status is very devaluing – based on their self-classification they have very weak, low-level elite consciousness. The elite consciousness is significantly different in each elite type. Two-thirds of those who belong to the economic and political elite group do not consider themselves to be elite (in each elite group, only every third of the women thought herself to be elite). The most critical rate was in the culture elite group, the people of this group feel themselves so far from being elite that hardly anybody considered her/himself to be elite.

In each elite type there is a difference between the proportion of men and women; in the economic elite group, the elite consciousness of men is bigger than that of the women, 50,9% of the men feel that they belong to elite.

The men from the culture elite group do not accept the elite classification similarly to the women in the culture elite group, they do not consider themselves to be elite either. Within the political elite group, the elite consciousness of men is significantly greater than that of the women. Almost twice as many men think (40,1%) their situation to be elite than women. The examination results of the women classification consciousness are devaluing. Hardly any of them feel to be in the uppermost class, they classify themselves to be in the upper middle-class (32,1%), moreover, to be in the middle-class (54%) The men classify themselves slightly higher, 54% of them think they belong to upper middle-class and 38,8% of them identified their status as elite. As a result we consider the following question to be important: "How do the women judge their own social prestige?" None of the groups seem to be satisfied. On a

range from one to five, the economic elite puts its prestige the highest (3,80), while the cultural elite the lowest (3,59). The connection between types of satisfaction and elite groups is reinforced by statistical data. According to it, the women in economic elite are the most satisfied in terms of everything (standard of living, social prestige, and influence on the country's affairs). As for the negative ratings, the less satisfied are the women in political elite in terms of life standard while regarding social prestige and influence on the country's affairs, the women in cultural elite are the most dissatisfied.

The ranking set by elite women and men (range between 0 and 100), which identified the elite categories and judges who have the greatest influence on the country's affairs, arranged the judges in a hierarchy based on their power and influence according to the elite's preference. Both of women and men think that the political elite has the greatest influence on the country's affairs. Economic elite get the second place while they did not considered to cultural elite to belong here. As for the positions each connected to a person, they ranked almost equally those who has ministerial position and the top level manager of the biggest bank in the country on the first place. Confirming their devaluation of their status, they positioned themselves on the bottom of the hierarchy in this, and also in the survey the positioned themselves in the last place "average citizen" instead of the "people who are in the similar position like them".

In summary, it seems that the Hungarian women elite cannot meet the conceptual criteria (Huszár 1981), which conception states the elite means a group of people who can make decisions – by possessing formally defined authoritarian positions – that has effects on the whole society. Reinforcing it, it can be told that the extension of status crystallization and status consistency are extremely small and not typical at all. Moreover, the connection the advantages and disadvantages in different status dimension made such system of inequality between men and women in the elite, that in the occupied good (according to certain criteria) do no produce further advantages equally for the both gender in the other dimensions.

It seems that the women elite does not fulfil its "elite-profession" in the present society, citing the classical quote: for this, the members of the elite should occupy those positions in the society's organisation, which with they could actually govern the society and influence them and make the biggest possible extension of following their governing activities" (Bibó 1994: 8).

3. Social value and beliefs – the characteristics of attitudes relating to taking state and market role

In the 19th and 20th century there were significantly divisive factors in the European politics regarding the political left and right wing's views of the state's possible duties. The left wing aimed – striving justice and equality between people – traditionally the extension of the state's involvement in terms of economic and social fields. In contrast, the right wing – citing freedom – tried to restrict the state's role-taking and strengthen individual responsibility and initiation in the society. However, the left and the right wings categories – due to their views on the state's involvement – differed from the traditional schemes in 1960's already. (Fábián-Tóth 2008) This is confirmed by the "third way" of social democrats and the social market developed by Austrian and West German christian democrats. At present, in the political communication it is constantly evolving what is the credible left or right side in terms of content (Fábián-Tóth 2008). It is affected by many factors, for example, the social and economic fragmentation of the voters – but even the politicians have significant effects. As a result, the same economic policy measure can be considered to be rightist if it is introduced

by the right wing government referring to freedom and market economy and it can be considered to be leftist if the government carries out on the behalf of social justice. The results of Fábíán and Tóth's (2008) research¹ on attitudes relating to state role (which is remarkable from our point of view) show that the respondents' expectation regarding work (unemployment) and learning are the strongest. By the measuring scale of identification with left or right wing it was clear that the people who preferred bigger state involvement belonged to the right side. *"It can be stated that the traditional being leftist relating to bigger state involvement has disappeared in Hungary on the level of mass attitude as well"* (Fábíán-Tóth 2008). However, the results of the examination on the identification with liberal or conservative attitudes, match better with the "expectations", that is, the liberals prefer smaller state.

All these were examined in the case of elite women too. We approached the topic mainly through their views about the required extension of the state's and the market's involvement. We evaluated their attitudes in terms of four priority categories – employment, income distribution, the responsibility for the individual's future and freedom vs. equality. The answers for the question related to the responsibilities for employment shows that the elite women are extremely divided as regards the intervening measures² to improve unemployed people's situation on the labour market. One-third of them definitely listed it as the state's responsibility and also one-third of them would leave the market to solve this problem. Also the same proportion considers that managing difficulties in employment would be both sectors' responsibility. In other words, if we evaluate according to the traditional system of value (i.e. the leftists prefer state's involvement while the rightists prefer the involvement of the market), we cannot conclude that there is significant difference between the leftists and rightists elite women's value, it can be completed with that a significant number of women are not committed to any side, emphasising both sides' responsibility for the problem. At the same time, Fábíán and Tóth's (2008) results proved that the categories cannot be clearly interpreted this way, since their research results show that the people committed to the right side prefer the state's involvement more.

It is known that the division of responsibilities between state and market- taking into account the principle of redistribution – is formed by the dominant social preferences which depend on the extension of solidarity in the society. In this field, almost one-third of the elite women do not feel any solidarity with people who got into difficult life situation (unemployed) or families; two-thirds of them, however, support more or less the state's measurements which are based on more equitable distribution and are to promote the cohesion of the society.

As a result of evaluating in each women elite type the market's or the individual's responsibility for employment, a significant connection between the type of elite and the type of choice of value can be seen. According to it, the most 'pro-government' type is the political elite group. Here's the biggest the proportion (38,8%) of those who think that "ensuring work for the unemployed people is the state's responsibility". The 'pro-market' group thinks that the problems related to employment should be solved by the market, the largest proportion

¹ For the research they used the databases of TARKI Household monitoring survey (2003-2007 years waves) and DKMKKA election survey

² The respondents had to answer for the following question: „Please sign which of the followings is the closest to your view. 1, It is the state's responsibility to provide job for the unemployed people. 2, Solving problems related to unemployment should be left for the market. 3, Both. 4, None.

of people who agrees with it can be found in the economic and cultural elite equally (38,1% in both). The highest proportion of those who think it is both the market's and state's responsibility to solve this problem are the women in the cultural elite, their rate is 53,7%.

As for examining differences between men and women in judgement employment, the significant connection between elite type and value choice can be noticed not only among women but men. It seems to be a considerable difference – among those who think it is the state's task to provide job for the unemployed people – among women that political elite has dominance while, among men the cultural elite's dominance can be observed 49,5%. Contrary, there is not a striking difference between those men and women who think that the unemployment problem should be solved the market. The men's cultural elite behave similarly since here can be found the largest proportion of those who think that solving employment problems resulted from unemployment should be the state's and the market's common responsibility (50,1%).

There is not so big division³ between women in terms of judging equality of income like the in case of the question of employment. According to the significant majority of the elite women (67,4%), the financial appreciation of the individuals' performance should have priority rather than the efforts of the equal income distribution. This distribution scheme of 'based on merit', which is considered to be primary for them, prefers the lack of the governmental interventions and the priority of free market distribution. Referring to the previous, according to the majority of elite women's view, the state should provide support unemployed people to get labour income but should not intervene in forming quality of these labour incomes. Most of them would make it dependent on the individuals' performance and cope with the position on the labour market.

We did not find significant differences between the elite types regarding the principle of income equality and the principle of performance. Internal proportions relating the sample show that mostly the economic elite think that the income should be distributed 'based on merit' (74,2% of them), that is, they represent the attitude of "the individual's performance should be more appreciated financially." The women's political elite agrees with it the least, although the measure rations among them show high rate (57,1%). All the three types of women elite agree the most with the convinced denial of the fair nature of the equal allocation.

Other correlations appear in the analysis of the differences between the genders. Among the men, the connection between attitudes relating elite type and income is reinforced by statistics. In the three men elite types, the principle of performance is dominant, that is, all of them refuse the idea of equalization of income. Similarly to women, the men's economic elite refuse it the defiantly, their proportion is 77,0 %, but over 60% of the political and cultural elite prefer the remuneration based on individual performance "based on merit".

In the women elite group the views are equal on how much responsibility should the state take for caring people⁴. Almost 50% of the women (48,4%) refuse the state's responsibility

³ The respondents had to answer for the following question: „Please sign which of the followings is the closest to your view. 1,The incomes should be more equal. 2, Individual's performance should be appreciated more. 3, Both. 4, None.

⁴ The respondents had to answer for the following question: „Please sign which of the followings is the closest to your view. 1,The people should take more responsibility for forming their future. 2, The state should take more responsibility for taking care of people. 3, Both. 4, None.

for the individuals' future and rather consider it to be the individual's responsibility. Consequently, since the state's intervention in a welfare state happens in order to protect the social justice and equity, they completely refuse these values. Only approximately one-tenth (11,4%) of them elite women are against to shuffle off the responsibility to the individuals, a quarter of them consider it as a common problem of the state and the individual.

All these results seem to be partly confirmed by Albert-Dávid's (2009) research results. They made a comparison between the EU member states in terms of how much responsibility and intervention is expected by the citizens of each state. According to their summarized results, although in the member states the women expect much more responsibility from the state than men; this result was not statistically verifiable. However the examination of educational qualifications provided significant correlations. According to it the people with lower educational qualification expect more intervention from the state than those who have higher qualifications. This correlation also showed significant connection in terms of Hungary. The correlation is even more remarkable which states that the more the people feel that they have their future on their hands, is the more they tend to feel that the people should take more responsibility for ensuring their livelihoods" (Albert-Dávid 2009:43) It seems that the views on the state's involvement is influenced by the differences between genders but other economic indicators like the level of education, income status on the labour market. According to Zsuzsa Ferge, "as we move upwards from bad social status to good social status, from small income to great income, to the more educated groups or to the winners of the political transformation, the number of people who appreciate freedom more than security is growing and the number of those who appreciate security more than freedom is decreasing. (...) the need for security is not the devaluation of freedom. It just seems to be more elementary need when it is in danger, like freedom. In other words, in security a person is freer. (Ferge 2000: 429-431). Evaluating the states' responsibility for caring people based on women elite types, show that overwhelming proportion of all the three groups clearly prefer individuals to take care of themselves. The political elite has mostly pro-government beliefs, that is, they have the greatest proportion of those who think that the state should have responsibility for the individuals, emphasising that the connection is not significant and the internal proportion is small (16,1%). At the same time, it is also true that the proportion of those who emphasises individuals' responsibilities is the biggest in the political elite (almost 50%) right after the economic elite. The women in economic elite prefer personal freedom to equality the most; their proportion is bigger than 50%, while the proportion in the other two groups is a bit smaller than 50%. So we cannot find significant differences within the elite groups. As we indicated previously, high level of education and higher income than the average have great influence on why the women prefer freedom as priority value to equality and security. At the same time, a relatively large group of the elite women would share the responsibility between the state and the individuals which group has the highest proportion in economic and cultural elite, the proportion of those who support dual responsibility, is almost on-third; in this group there are several people who support the need of interventions by the state.

Disagreements between genders is not typical in the elite regarding this question, it is statistically proved that the men prefer self-care in every elite group and like in the case of women (although the men has significantly bigger proportion), this attitude mostly typical of the value choice of the people in the economic elite (65,5%). Regarding the elite types, the biggest proportion of men who agree with the greater involvement of the state, can be found in the political elite (23,9%). At the same time, almost one-third of the cultural and

political elite consider the caring for the members of the society to be a common responsibility of the state and the individual.

Summary

To sum up the above all, we presented the attitudes in connection with elite women's value preferences, income distribution and responsibility taken for the people's future taking into account the ideological background factors of freedom and equality. Regarding the question of employment the research dealt with the state's and the market's responsibility for the interventions that improve the unemployed people's chances on the labour market. We can state that the elite women are divided in this regard. We put emphasis on the group that has one-third proportion, which group has not got at least minimal solidarity in terms of the society's unemployed members. In this category, the women political elite acted solidarity significantly the most. This group thinks, for this issue, the state should be responsible. Contrarily, 40% of the other two elite groups think that the market is responsible for solving this problem. There is a considerable difference between the genders: while among the women the political elite show solidarity with unemployed people, among the men it is the cultural group. In the case of fair or unfair nature of the equal allocation of incomes, the women elite is less divided. They emphasised the fair nature of the inequality regarding income and consider individual performance and coping with positions on the labour market as priority. In the third category which dealt with how much responsibility should the state take for the individuals future, we can conclude that a significant proportion of them – almost the half of them – proved to be definitely pro-market, that is, they completely refuse any level of state responsibility. As we detailed, they consider social justice and equality to be basic values to have, so we can state that a significant proportion of women elite does not show solidarity with the members of the society who has weak status and they are not willing to treat them fairly and/or equally. Results of national researches, confirmed that the educational qualification and the magnitude of the possessed incomes have great influence on these beliefs, as we have seen, the better status (especially educational, income) the individual has is the more likely refuse these values. We did not find significant differences between the gender, men and women have similar views regarding these questions.

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