

Good News for Working Mothers- You Are More Productive Than You Think

A recent report, published as a working paper by the Research Division at the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis has stated that parents with two or more children are more productive in the office than those with only one child or no children at all. The study, which was conducted to examine the link between productivity and parenthood amongst a group of academic economists, has been regarded by the Washington post as encouraging news for working moms.

Approximately 10,000 highly skilled economists were assessed and the results of the study revealed that:

"Mothers of at least two children are on average, more productive than mothers of only one child. It was found as well that mothers are generally more productive than childless women,"

The study also went on to add that although the productivity levels of fathers of two or more children also increased, mothers with the same number of children proved to be the most productive of all. It was duly noted however, that when children are young, parents are less productive but as offspring grew older- usually well into their teenage years, the productivity level of parents increased surpassing that of their peers with one or no children.

Christian Zimmermann, one of the authors of the study stated:

"It's all about timing. It's really when the children are younger that there is an impact, but if you consider the whole career of the person, then on average, the person [who has two or more children] is doing better."

He goes on to say:

‘The findings may be more about the personality of these parents than about the effect parenthood has on how well you can work. The 10,000 parents who were studied do not include those moms and dads who fell off the career track after having children, so the subjects were a self-selecting group who likely knew they could handle parenthood before embarking on it. ‘

The study also makes a point of highlighting the exceptions to the rule. It cited that women who became mothers before the age of 30 saw a very negative effect on their professional productivity, as did unmarried mothers who became mothers.

It must also be pointed out that a 2013 report also conducted in St. Louis found that mothers under 18 with young children earned less than their childless counterparts. The same was found to be true with men. Therefore, it should be remembered that the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis study speaks to its data pool, a narrow group of highly educated, highly skilled professional women who usually plan parenthood, and thus the authors are adamant to reinforce the fact that their findings may not apply to a wider set of women in different circumstances.

However, the good news is that given the right conditions professional moms do not have to worry that becoming parents would jeopardize their careers- this in itself being an idea that could be applied to other women in similar working situations.