

WOMEN IN A MARKET ECONOMY. THE PLACE OF WORK IN WOMEN'S LIVES. CASE OF POLAND.

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ABSTRACT

In the changing situation on the labor market and the development of a market economy, women are now a desired workforce due to their social and mental skills and their accumulated social and cultural capital.

Firstly, based on statistical data, the professional activities of women in Poland, unemployment of women and the women's specific labor market will be presented in the article. The activities of women in preparation for professional roles (achieved education) will be presented. The reasons - fewer than expected - of women's professional activity will be defined.

Then the issue of work and its place in the lives of women, especially women in Silesia, will be undertaken. The analysis will be presented based on the Author's own research, which examined the issue of values, including the value of work. The results of the research on the acceptance of women's work, considering the diversity of gender, age, and education will be presented. Then the characteristics of work will be analyzed for both genders, paying attention to the specific characteristics of women's work, useful in the current job market. Women, in fact, due to the preferred operating characteristics of work are good candidates for the positions in services sector. In conclusion, both the theoretical and practical applications of the changing place of work in women's lives will be formulated.

KEY WORDS: women, market economy, work

INTRODUCTION

In the changing situation on the labor market and the development of the market economy, women are a desired workforce because of their social and mental skills and accumulated social and cultural capital. The division of labor by gender was established during the period of industrialism. Industry has created a demand for typically male professions (eg miner, metallurgist). Although women were often running the households, there existed a place for them in the then existing social division of labor (eg, spinner, coal grader). Currently, the developing market economy is creating many jobs in the services that can be successfully undertaken by both men and women. Some jobs and services are however typically female and require mainly female staff (clothing stores for women, cosmetics shops, beauty salons, spas, etc).

The article aims to firstly show, on the basis of objective data, the economic activity of women in Poland compared to other European countries. Then, on the basis of the author's own research, the degree of women's acceptance of work in relation to men, and the features of work for both sexes, paying attention to the specific features of women's work. In conclusions both theoretical and practical assumptions concerning the changing place of professional work in the lives of women will be formulated.

1. Professional activity of women in Poland

The professional activity of women in Poland ranks on an average level compared to other European countries (57.6% - Poland, 56.7% - Slovakia, 61.7% - the Czech Republic, 67.6% -

Estonia, 59.4% - Hungary, 72.4% - Denmark, 59.4% - Ireland, 48.6% - Greece, 64.7% - France, 49.9% - Italy, 77.1% - Norway, 77.2% - Sweden) (www.eurostat.pl - downloaded on 02/23/2013). Women in Poland have since 1992 been classified as having a lower level in labor force participation than men (about 14.5 - 16.0%) and a lower employment rate (the difference 12.6 - 15.9%) (Sztanderska, Grodkowska 2009: 59). Both men and women are characterized by their high professional activity between the ages of 25 and 44, but women reach their peak of professional activity much later (Sztanderska, Grodkowska 2009: 59). In recent years, there has been an increase in the activity of women in the age group 25-34 years. This is due to the fact that most women choose to delay giving birth, and first try to strengthen their position in the labor market. The decline in professional activity in Poland concerns mainly two age groups of women - the youngest up to 25 years old, and the oldest at the age of retirement. The lower activity of the first group is associated with an increase in the demand for highly skilled workers, and thus a longer education period. The second group, in turn, choose to go on early retirement and obtain retirement benefits in order to avoid unemployment.

The level of unemployment is higher among women than men (in 2011: W - 13.5%, M - 12.5%) (National Census, www.stat.gov.pl). In addition to the reasons for the lower supply of jobs for all, the reason may lie in the fact that men are often preferred by employers. A woman with children has a weaker position, even if she has the appropriate education and professional training.

Women undertake work in other sectors than men and their labor market differs from the male market. Many women work in the public sector. This applies to 45% of women (National Census 2011, www.stat.gov.pl [02/23/2013]). To a large extent this is due to the fact that some public sector jobs are associated with women (eg, teacher, kindergarten teacher, nurse, clerk, etc.). Jobs in the public sector provide a greater sense of security than working in the private sector. It usually requires a higher education. Women can thus boast of a higher level of education than men. In 2011, women with higher education was 19.0%, and only 14.8% of men (National Census, www.stat.gov.pl [02/23/2013]). In 2002, one in every 10 women had a degree in higher education, and nine years later, the number has almost doubled. Nowadays, higher education is generally required in order to obtain a good job. Therefore, women are more likely to make an effort to complete it in order to get or keep a job.

2. Acceptance of women's work

In traditional working-class communities, the place of women was at home. For example, in Silesian communities, which will be the subject of further analysis, the wives of miners did not used to work. There was a lack of approval for their activity on the part of both men and women themselves (Mrozek, 1965, Mrozek 1987). Over time, the situation changed and women, in the period of real socialism, started their careers. This resulted, however, mainly from economic factors, as the most important task for a women was to implement the role of wife and mother (Swadźba 2009: 62-78).

Due to such cultural factors, the author in her research project on the three values of work, family and religion, also included the problem of the place of work in the lives of women, as well as the specific characteristics of women's work. The study was conducted in 2010 in three Silesian towns (Swadźba 2012).¹ The theoretical concept by Ronald Inglehart was used

¹ The research was carried by the author in 2009, under the grant of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education No. N N116 230036 Fri: "Values - continuity and change. Sociological study of Silesian communities. " Three locations were selected: Bogucice - a district of Katowice, Rydułtowy near Rybnik and the suburban community Wry (23 km from Katowice). The study included people aged 19 to 75 years. Quota selection of people was used in the study (age, sex, education). A total of 540 categorized interviews were conducted, 180 interviews in each location.

saying that with the ongoing economic prosperity are shifting from materialistic values (to ensure the safety and survival) to post-materialist values (emphasizing the need for self-expression and quality of life). For these two reasons, one can observe a significant difference in the value systems of young and older generations (Inglehart 1990, Inglehart 1997, Inglehart, Basanez, Moreno 1998, Inglehart, Norris 2003, Human ... 2004, Siemieńska, Inglehart 1988, Siemieńska 1988). The problem of acceptance of women's work was also undertaken in the ongoing studies of European values (EVS). Some of the questions of these studies were also used by the author. In the closed questions, respondents had to respond to the claims presented below and choose one of five responses: "Definitely yes", "Probably yes", "Probably not", "Definitely not", "Hard to say".

In analyzing the answers to the following statement with regard to the presented categories, one can say that they are indicative of the often different views.

Table 1. When there is a shortage of work, men should be considered for jobs before women (%) N = 540

Category of respondents	Types of responses					
	Definitely yes	Probably yes	Probably not	Definitely not	Hard to say	Total
Gender						
Women	15,6	22,8	26,4	27,5	9,5	100,0
Men	11,4	11,4	29,7	38,0	9,5	100,0
Total	13,5	17,2	28,0	31,9	9,4	100,0
Age						
Up to 30 years	3,9	8,7	25,2	50,5	11,7	100,0
31-40 years	8,8	13,7	28,4	38,2	10,9	100,0
41-50 years	11,7	22,5	31,5	27,0	7,3	100,0
51-60 years	18,9	11,6	30,5	25,3	13,7	100,0
61-70 years	20,5	28,2	21,8	24,4	5,1	100,0
above 70 years	25,5	23,5	29,4	15,7	5,9	100,0
Education						
Primary/Lower secondary	25,0	26,8	16,1	25,0	7,1	100,0
Vocational	17,8	21,8	28,7	21,3	10,4	100,0
Secondary/post-secondary	10,3	16,4	26,7	37,9	8,7	100,0
Higher	7,4	6,5	32,4	42,6	11,1	100,0

Source: Own research and calculations.

After analysis of the results there is a strong indicator that shows the majority of respondents did not agree with the statement (31.9% - "definitely not", 28.0% - "probably not", with a total of 59.9%). Just over 13% of people strongly agreed that in the absence of jobs, of which we have in Poland, the first to be employed should be men. This is not a high acceptance as EVS studies of 1999 in Poland showed higher levels of acceptance of this situation - 28% (Sikorska, 2002: 27). This is still, however, higher than in other European countries and the neighboring Czech Republic - 28% (Human ... 2004, Hodnoty a postoje ...: 120). Comparing the current results and the results of previous studies of Rybnik, one can conclude that the prejudice against working women are lower in Silesia than the rest of Poland (Swadźba 2008:

65-79, Swadźba 2010: 245-263). This could perhaps be explained by a lower rate of unemployment in the voivodeship of Silesia, where it is easier to find work in urban areas. Some jobs in the industry (mining) are designed exclusively for men and there is no conflict of interest here. Nationwide surveys show that there is bias against working women. For example, in CBOS research more than half of the respondents indicate gender as an important factor that has an impact on obtaining a job (17% - a very large, 41% - Large) (Lewandowska, Wenzel: 2004).

Views on equality in employment between men and women are influenced by gender, age and education. Gender has a relatively minimal impact. In other countries, as shown by the EVS study, differences in responses between the genders are greater, for example, in the neighboring Czech Republic: The answer "agree" W - 22%, M - 34% (Human ... 2004: C001, Hodnoty a postoje... 2009: 120) . Women are less acceptant to this statement than men, and above all much more strongly opposed to it (almost 40% of women). Men often choose indirect options "probably yes" and "probably not". In short, one cannot say that the lack of acceptance of women's employment in the absence of jobs, both among women and men, is low. There is a noticeable change in public awareness, especially the awareness of men.

Age is an important variable differentiating the contributions. Only 3.9% of young people strongly agree that men should have more right to a job in the absence of jobs, in opposition to 25.5% of people over 70 years of age. On the other hand, over 50% of young people strongly disagree with this view, while only 15.7% of the oldest generation. Age is therefore the variable which has the greatest influence on responses. The same dependence occurred in the previous studies (Swadźba 2007: 44-54, Swadźba 2010: 252). This is characteristic of our society, because EVS studies in other countries do not show such differences between generations, such as EVS study in the Czech Republic have almost the same percentage of accepting to this statement in various age groups (27-29%) (Hodnoty a postoje..., 120) . In Poland, and especially in the communities in Silesia, the oldest generation (people over 70 years of age) have traditional views on women's work and think its priority in obtaining should go to men. This is a generation that was brought up in the stereotypical division of social roles, where women did not work. The younger generation of older respondents (61-70 years old) has a more tolerant view on women's work. In the 60s while this generation was entering the labor market, women more often undertook professional work. Therefore, both men and women were accustomed to this situation. The youngest generation considers women's work as a normal situation. Thus, it is difficult to find people who contest the same right to work for men and women.

Views on the employment of women are also dependent on education. People with lower education (primary and vocational education) are more accepting of this statement than those with secondary education, and especially higher education. Over 75% of people with higher education does not accept the primacy of the situation of men having priority in obtaining a job, 42.6% "definitely do not" agree. Almost half of people with primary education agree with this statement, and ¼ strongly agree. These results are not surprising, because most people with low education are older and they do not accept the equality of opportunities for men and women in employment in the absence of work. Similar results were obtained in previous studies in Rybnik (Swadźba 2010: 252). The differences in the results obtained in the current study are greater than in other countries, especially the Czech Republic, where the differences in response to "agree" between people with primary and tertiary education are only a few percent (Primary - 29%, Tertiary - 22%) (Hodnoty a postoje...: 120).

The answer to this contention is also dependent on the marital status of the respondents. Married and widowers more often accept the situation where priority of labor should go to men than unmarried people (bachelors, maidens, the divorced and separated people). For example, the statement is strongly agreed with by 15% of widowed and married, and only 3%

of unmarried people. The lack of acceptance is shown by about 50% of unmarried (eg, 52.0% divorced), and only 25% of married people. Unmarried people, especially women who are the sole breadwinners in families strongly oppose the priority of men in finding work.

Confirmation of a positive attitude towards working women is common for miners' wives. The wife of a miner in the stereotypical perception used to be professionally inactive. However this situation has changed, because when the respondents were asked that activity wives of miners undertake in the immediate family, 60% indicated that they are working professionally. In particular, this applies to the younger generations of miners' wives, where most of them work professionally. The lack of professional activity affects only those young women who are caring for young children. There is also a change of roles within mining families, due to the possibility of early retirement of miners after 25 years of working underground. Miners may already retire at the age of 45. Therefore the stereotypical situation reverses in the miner family and it is the wife who works professionally and the former miner who is engaged in the household. Of the respondents, 20% of respondents know that this situation exists within their families (Frajer 2011). Among the extended family, this percentage is even higher and amounts to 35%. This situation means a change of awareness in the mining families. Women's work is acceptable and necessary, not only because of the material security, but also because of the creative and self-realization aspects of the woman.

In summary of this part of the analysis it can be concluded that in Poland including the Silesian communities there is a high acceptance of women's work, even in the absence of jobs. This acceptance applies to both women, which is understandable, and also men. Their professional work is a great value. A young age, higher education and living in a big city favor acceptance, whereas an older age and low education does not. This means that there has been a great change of awareness and women's work is seen as something absolutely natural and necessary. The environment in which such a phenomenon is treated with some distance, are older and middle-aged people, lower educated man and people working in the industry.

3. Features of work

Another important aspect in the analysis of women's work is the features work, as they are decisive in the valuation and performance of work. The changing nature of work and the shift from hard work in the industry towards service related work, lead to a different priority in features of work. In particular, they are different for women. To verify the author's conclusions from a sociological point of view and from observation, which give evidence of these changes, respondents were asked a question about the features work. These are the qualities that are particularly important for professionally active respondents. There were 15 features work listed which are presented in the table below. Respondents had the following response options: very important, fairly important, fairly unimportant, and hard to say. Most respondents choose one of the first three possible responses. Due to the limited space in the article only the "very important" responses are presented in the table. This response means that this feature work plays an important role in the minds of respondents.

Table 2. Characteristics of work and sex of respondents (response-very important) (%) N = 540

	Men	Women	Total
1.Good earnings	81,3	78,6	80,1
2.Certainty of work	82,6	84,1	83,2
3.Lack of tension at work	56,7	62,7	59,6
4.Friendly people with whom you work	59,0	69,9	64,2
5.Meeting with people	23,0	31,2	26,9
6.Work treated with respect	42,0	49,6	45,6
7.Community service	14,8	23,6	18,9
8.Interesting work	49,8	56,2	52,8
9.Work corresponding with skills	47,9	52,9	50,6
10.Work in which you feel that you can achieve something	31,8	42,0	36,7
11.Major opportunities for promotion	29,2	28,6	28,9
12.Opportunity to show initiative	25,2	28,6	26,9
13.Responsible work	32,1	31,2	31,7
14.Convenient hours	29,2	35,5	32,2
15.Long leaves	24,6	21,4	22,9

Source: own research and calculation

The table does not include the lack of data nor the cases where there were only single answers.

The highest values obtained the characteristics of work that are associated with existential values "Certainty of work" and "Good earnings". These were indicated by more than 80% of respondents. When it comes to "Good earnings" this is a feature work, which in sociological research always reaches high values (Sikorska 2002: 22-45, Swadźba 2001: 155-161, Boguszewski 2011). This applies to Poles, but also citizens of other European countries. However, the high indications for "certainty of work", is specifically Polish (Sikorska 2002: 22-45, Swadźba 2001, 155-161). This shows a great commitment to the value of work among Poles. On the other hand, the specificity of responses is forced by the Polish labor market, characterized by high unemployment. In such a labor market, those who have work must appreciate it.

The second level of importance of response are related to the social and self-realization spheres (50 - 64% of responses). Respondents indicated here the importance of " Friendly people with whom you work " and "lack of tension at work." Therefore, the atmosphere at work and relations with co-workers are important. The self-realization characteristics of work are also important to respondents: "Interesting work" and "Work corresponding with skills". The absence of such features lead to dissatisfaction at work.

The third level of importance also relates to the social and self-realization spheres (20 - 36% of responses). Features such as "Work treated with respect", "Responsible work", and "Work in which you feel that you can achieve something" were chosen. These are self-realization features of a higher order and are associated with achieving higher positions and promotions at work, which is not important to all people.

A separate feature of work, which reached the lowest value is "Community service" (18.9%). This feature of the work in comparable studies did not reach such a low value (Sikorska 2002: 31). It could prove that the respondents prefer to focus on the features of work that are familiar to them. The analysis of the responses indicates that the axis around which the features of work focus are individualist, rather than pro-community. The motifs behind

choosing professional careers are mainly focused on personal profit: whether material or non-material (existential, creative, discretionary).

Which features of work are preferred by women? Women's responses may be divided into the same groups as above, but there are some differences. First of all, almost all the features work in the responses of women reach higher values. The exceptions are four features: "Good earnings", "Major opportunities for promotion", "Long leaves" and "Responsible work". These features of work are higher valued by men. Analyzing other features, it can be stated that women place higher value on such features as "Certainty of work" (1.5% difference), "Friendly people with whom you work" (10.9%), "Work in which you feel you can achieve something"(10.2%), "Interesting work"(6.4%), "Work corresponding with skills"(5.0%). "Community service" also reached higher rankings. Women appreciate work due to its social, development and creative features. There is a lower importance of material features and possible promotions that for men. In particular, young educated women value creativity and development features of work (Interesting work: 61.2%, Work in which you feel that you can achieve something: 49.1%, Work treated with respect: 52.3%). Therefore, work is an important value for women, as it could lead to personal achievement. Interestingly, even young educated women do not put as much importance to high incomes as their male counterparts. Such a relationship has already been indicated in earlier sociological studies (Bartoszek, 2003, 112-131). Women find comfortable working hours, in order to pursue their roles as mothers, as more important.

Women should therefore be very valuable to employers because of the high value they place on the features of work. These are the features of work which are close to post-materialistic values. These features are very useful in the services sector, where creativity, initiative, and good organization help companies achieve their goals. It is a generational change that occurs in the former traditional communities, where a woman's place was at home and with the children. Professional work and its performance is a great value for Silesian women. It provides evidence of changes in the traditional system of values and changes in the consciousness of the Silesian women. Professional work has become an integral part of women's lifestyles. They cannot imagine their lives and social interaction without work.

CONCLUSION

To sum up this part of the analysis of women's work in Poland, including Silesia, its acceptance and features of work, it should be stated that:

- Women in Poland are characterized by the average professional activity compared to women in other European countries. The activity level is determined by the availability of jobs. Poland is characterized by a relatively high unemployment rate. In this situation women, due to the combination of roles the employee with the role of wife and mother, often lose out to men in their efforts to work.
- Professional work is an accepted social activity of women, for the majority of respondents. In the absence of jobs, both women and men, do not accept a situation of discrimination against women. The acceptance of this is favored by a younger age and a higher education, but age is a stronger factor than education. This indicates a movement of social consciousness in the direction of post-materialist values.
- Women are more likely than men to carry out the selection of social and creative features of work. Existential values are of less importance to them. This indicates a preference for post-materialist values. The selection of the features of work shows that women are well prepared for professional roles in services. Employers, in their recruitment decisions, should take into account the fact that they often combine their roles as employees with their roles within the family. In employing women, they will gain good employees.

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