

UNETHICAL BEHAVIOURS TOWARDS WOMEN IN ORGANIZATIONS IN LUBELSKIE VOIVODESHIP-OWN RESEARCH

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Abstract:

Recent changes in the social and economic life created the conditions for a better life for women, both in everyday and professional life. However, the topic of equality, access to jobs and career opportunities for women are often only lofty slogans. The article presents the results of authors' own research for discriminatory actions against women at the professional level, conducted in 2012-2013 in the Lublin region. The results clearly indicate the occurrence of many of unethical behaviors against women, especially the financial discrimination and ageism.

Keywords: unethical behaviours, behaviour in organization, discrimination against women, organizational pathologies, women in the organizations, diversity management

1. INTRODCUCTION

The situation of women in Polish companies has been constantly improving recently (Haponiuk, 2014 p. 2). This is mainly for Poland socio-economic development , which contributed to the development of entrepreneurship, thus, the development changes of different organisations and behaviours thereof. Yet, the changes have not successfully eliminated undesired behaviours towards women. Women, unlike men, still experience different obstacles and difficulties in their professional lives (Lisowska, 2009). The ideas of emancipation and equality are often empty slogans or dead letters. Therefore, the authors decided to analyse the incidence of undesired behaviours, mainly discriminatory behaviours towards women in companies. the research conducted in 2012-2013 is a continuation of pilot research in 2011 on a group of 122 respondents (61 women and 61 men). The obtained results indicated the presence of inappropriate behaviours, especially in professional situations, ageism and salaries in companies in Lubelskie Voivodeship (Cichorzewska& Jabłczyńska,2011, pp.217-223). The present research was conducted on a group of 492 respondents, including 268 women and 224 men.

2. DIFFERENT FORM OF WOMEN DISCRIMINATION

Discrimination can be defined as "differentiation, exclusion, restriction or preventing women, irrespective of their marital status, from exercising equal rights, human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil life or any others situation" (Kupczyk,2009,p.21).

Another major problem with equality policy in the labour market is the horizontal and vertical segregation.

Horizontal segregation involves the uneven representation of sexes in different jobs. Therefore, we deal with "excess or deficiency of women or men in certain socio-professional categories, in certain sectors and industries of the economy and some positions in the bureaucratic structures" (Janicka, 1995, p.95).

On the other hand, vertical segregation is the low participation of women in decision-making - disproportions in representation of women and men in leadership positions in government, education, health and private sector. Difficult access to promotion, occupying positions of leadership and decision making is related to such terms as:

- "Glass ceiling", i.e. an invisible barrier that seems to separate women from the highest levels of careers, preventing them to get promoted to the top. The obstacles are most frequently faced by women in managerial positions. This expression represents the prospects of career which is unreachable;
- "Sticky floor" refers to the low-status occupations in which the prospects of promotion are low – people performing the job are "stuck" at the lowest positions. This term refers to such activities as office clerk, secretary, beautician, tailor or domestic help, which are largely dominated by women;
- "Glass escalator" means the invisible which promotes men to higher ranks contrasting the "glass ceiling" that is an invisible barrier on women's way to the top positions;
- "Velvet ghetto" characterized by preventing women from managing technical departments, production and marketing;
- "Tokenism" describing a situation in which the presence of a few women in groups or in positions dominated by men gives a false illusion of gender equality, and thus "releases" the responsibility for considering discriminatory attitudes and behaviour (Kupczyk, 2009, p. 22).

A number of sociological research concerning women's socio-professional position prove the fact of discrimination.

The most recent Eurostat estimates, based on the study of the structure of earnings, indicate the existence of a large heterogeneity among the EU Member States with regard to the wage gap between women and men. They range from less than 10% in such countries as Italy, Malta, Poland, Slovenia and Belgium, through more than 20% in Slovakia, the Netherlands, the Czech Republic, Germany, Great Britain, Greece and Cyprus to over 25% in Estonia and Austria. According to estimates by the European Union, in Poland, the average is 7.5%, while in the Czech Republic it is

23%, in Estonia - 30%, in UK - 21%, in Finland - 20%, in Hungary - 16% (<http://odpowiedzialny.biznes.pl>, p.19).

Moreover, women are more often affected by double discrimination - based on age and gender. Young women up to thirty years of age or those who are over 55 are reluctantly employed, and their chances for managerial positions are much lower. Women in highest executive positions in 2008 Fortune 1000 companies (USA) were mostly aged 28-50. In the range of 51-61, their number significantly decreased. No such decrease was observed in case of men (Catalyst, 2008). Another manifestation of discrimination is a job evaluation depending on whether it is performed by women or by men (Grimshaw&Rubery, 2007).

The European Union statistics on the participation of women in company boards, with the exception of the boards of central banks, Poland (10.3%) is located below the average for the whole EU, which is 16.6%. Poland is a country in which a decrease of certain indicators was reported in 2010-2013.

Also the Gender Equality Index for the European Community reaches the value below average in Poland. In 2013 the total value of the index was for EU Member States was 54. The highest equality rate was achieved in Scandinavian countries, including Sweden (74.6), Denmark (73.6) and Finland (73.4). Poland was in the group of countries with the lowest level of equity index which reached 44.1, ahead of Lithuania, Bulgaria and Romania. It is interesting that in the EU as a whole there is the lowest level of equality in the sphere of political power and free time, while the greatest equality in health care (Haponiuk,2014, p.6).

According to statistics, the difference in wages between men and women increases with age, education and years of experience in work. This difference is more than 30% among those aged 50-59, and only 7% of those under 30. Among people with higher education it is more than 30%, and among those with secondary education - 13%. Among those who worked in a company for over 30 years, this difference reaches 32%, but it is 10% lower among those who work in a given company for 1-5 years.

Unequal treatment of women in the labour market is also reflected in the level of wages. Even though women are better educated, they earn less. The differences in earnings between men and women is about 17.7% 16. Essential information about the differences in wages is also provided by National Survey of Salaries (NSS). In 2012, women earned about 1,000 PLN less than men, and their average salary was 3500 PLN. (Haponiuk, 2014, p.9)

3. CURRENT SITUATION OF WOMEN IN LUBLIN COMPANIES IN AUTHOR'S OWN RESEARCH

On the basis of the data obtained from studies conducted in 2012-2013, it was attempted to analyse the results in order to search for the answer to the question on the scale of unethical behaviour towards women, especially discriminatory behaviour because of gender, salary and age. The study included 492 respondents, out of which 268 were women and 224 were men. The study was performed by using a diagnostic survey questionnaire, designed specifically for that exploration. They constituted a continuation of pilot studies conducted in 2011. (Cichorzewska&Jablczyńska,2011, p.217-233). Then the results obtained led to take further scientific penetration due to the fact that the respondents pointed to cases of discrimination against women in the workplace. As in the pilot study, the questionnaire contained 33 closed questions, but they are differentiated based on respondents' sex. While women were asked directly about their experience of discrimination, men were asked for their opinions and knowledge on the subject.

In addition, the research questionnaire was divided into three parts. And so, the first included 11 questions about discrimination against women in the workplace, especially because of their age, gender, salary and motherhood. The second block, consisting of 7 questions, concerned harassment. In the third section, 3 questions concerned the issues of sexual harassment. The last group consisted of questions on age, gender, education, type and nature of work, the size of the company and the industry, as well as job experience.

The place of performing the tests was Lubelskie Voivodeship, located in central-eastern Poland. Selection of companies was based on the possibility to obtain reliable results, depending on the sector

in which the company operates and the location. The selection of respondents was carried out using an intentional sample. The crucial point of eligibility in the study was a professional activity in the company, located in the Lublin region. On the other hand, the same tests were carried out in a form of a "face to face" questionnaire interview. It should be noted that during the exploration, there were no cases of refusal to answer. However, there were cases where respondents skipped or deliberately neglected the questions. These were a few such situations and they did not affect the results.

In the question on equal treatment, less than half of the female respondents and more than half of the male respondents answered that women are treated equally in their companies. About 1/3 of the women surveyed and less than 1/5 of the men indicated that there is no equality. Quite a large proportion of women (over 1/4) and men (almost 1/3) had no knowledge of the subject. The presence of responses showing disparities in the treatment of employees because of their gender is worrying. This means that this type of unethical behaviour is frequent and the companies are not effective in protecting the rights of female employees. In addition, the employees themselves do not have the tools to prevent such behaviours.

In the question about discrimination, 36% of women confirmed this fact. 21% of women indicated inequality because of age, 9% because of motherhood, and more than 55% because of salary. The remaining 14% of women who chose answer "other", wrote about the phenomenon of harassment in their workplace. On the other hand, c.a. 29% of men felt that women in their companies are discriminated, but to a large extent, no specific type of discrimination was given. The distribution of the remaining answers was as follows: 37.7% of women and 38% of men felt that there is no discrimination on grounds of sex in their workplace. 26% of women and 32% of men chose the answer "I do not know".

When it comes to the possibility of promotion, slightly more than half of the respondents believe that women have the same opportunities as men. Nearly half of the men are of similar opinion. Difficulties in the promotion due to gender are noticed by almost 20% of women and almost 15% of men. Quite a large proportion of responses (almost 30% of women and over 36% of men) indicate a lack of knowledge in this field.

A large discrepancy among the surveyed men and women can be seen by analysing the responses to the question regarding women's remuneration. Thus, c.a. 29% of women and c.a. 39% of men believe that women earn as much as men in their organizations. In contrast, 40% of women and only 17% of men believe the opposite. A considerable interest (c.a. 31% of female respondents, and almost 45% of male respondents) had no opinion on the subject. In this context, the analysis of respondents' salaries seems very interesting. A vast majority of women (almost 55%) declared that their earnings are between 501 (EUR) and 750 (EUR) (gross). A vast majority of men (c.a. 33%) indicated that their salary is between 751 (EUR) and 1000 (EUR). The exact distribution of earnings is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Respondents' remuneration according to sex

Question: What is your salary?		
	Women	Men
250 (EUR) - 500 (EUR) (gross)	25%	10%
501 (EUR) -750 (EUR) (gross)	54%	29%
751 (EUR) - 1000 (EUR) (gross)	14%	34%
1001 (EUR)(gross) and more	7%	27%

Source: own elaboration

Next, the respondents (41% of women and 45% of men) indicated that financial rewards are awarded in the same amounts. But 22% of female respondents, and only about 8% of male respondents said that there are differences in rewarding employees based on gender. Almost 38% of women and over 47% of men were not able to answer this question.

The results clearly indicate that wage discrimination against women occurs in Lublin companies. This confirms the results obtained in the pilot study conducted in 2011 by M. Cichorzewska and G. Jabłczyńska (Cichorzewska&Jabłczyńska, 2011) and the research carried out by D. Polkowska

(Polkowska, 2011, p.33), A. Świdzińska (Świdzińska, 2013 p.6-34) and also by G. Firlit-Fesnak (Firlit-Fesnak, 2007 p.179). It can be concluded that the research hypothesis concerning wage discrimination of female employees is fully justified.

The majority of respondents (c.a. 48% of women and c.a. 47% of men) would choose a 30-year-old woman with qualifications but no work experience for a job vacancy. About 30% of female respondents and approx. 38% of male respondents would choose a man over 50 years of age with appropriate qualifications and experience. The rest of the respondents (22% women and 15% men) would choose a woman over 50 years of age with the right skills and proven experience. In this case, the so-called age discrimination (ageism) may be observed in Lublin enterprises. The presence of this phenomenon has also been confirmed also in the previously conducted analysis (Świdzińska, 2013, p.6-34).

Three further questions were intended to check the existence of discrimination on the grounds of sex. The respondents were asked about whether they experienced comparing the competence of female in relation to male employees, and if there were cases of discrediting decisions on the basis of decision maker's sex.

The majority of respondents gave negative answers to all the questions (over 80% of women, and 90% of men). Thus, in this area, the situation is quite good, although there were also positive responses, what indicates the existence of individual cases of discrimination against women in this aspect. However, one should monitor whether these are incidental unethical behaviours or a rising trend.

It is worth noting that the above results confirm the results obtained by other researchers in this area. This means that inappropriate behaviour is an important issue in the management of organizations operating in Lubelskie Voivodeship. The role and importance of women in management tends to have been constantly underestimated, especially in the area of entrepreneurship and economic development of regions. They are usually presented in the context of managing diversity, gender and organisational culture. It also proved in the analysis of gender studies conducted by D. Polkowska which bring conclusions about vertical and horizontal occupational segregation of women in the region. They show that vertical segregation in the studied areas is visible, what means that women still face difficulties in accessing leadership and executive positions (Polkowska, 2011, p.31). The study carried out by Lisowska ("Gender Index") indicate that women advance to a certain point, but do not reach the highest positions. In Poland, 36% of managerial positions are held by women - with the European Union average 27-33%, but the presidents or highest executives make only 2%. In the US more than 10% of the highest positions are held by women (Lisowska, 2007). It can be argued that the problem of discrimination against women occurs in Poland, but also in other, much more developed European countries.

4. SUMMARY

The aim of the paper was to analyse some unethical behaviours, especially gender, age and wage discrimination, towards women in companies in Lubelskie Voivodeship. The exploration of the problem indicates that the problem of discrimination against women in businesses exists. Although it does not affect all employees, the fact of its existence demonstrates various difficulties that women still face in a difficult labour market in Lubelskie region. Another concern is the fact that many people from the respondents indicated the answer "I do not know", which could mean a lack of awareness or insufficient knowledge in the tested area, thus, the lack of sufficient protection against common organizational pathologies and violations of employees' rights.

Presenting selected unethical behaviours, it was noticed that wage discrimination is the most common form of non-observance of the equality principle, encountered not only in the regional, but also in the national labour market. All other manifestations of immoral behaviours, including discrimination based on age, gender, motherhood, various types of mobbing, are also present to varying degrees.

The analysis of selected problems of women in companies in Lubelskie Voivodeship, in the light of present studies, confirmed that women face many obstacles in their professional development. It was also found that the majority of executive positions are offered to men while women have limited career

prospects and lower remuneration. Further research in this field, larger test groups will allow a better exploration of the issues and the authors will help to find ways to reduce them.

One should realize that the presence of certain organizational pathologies has a direct impact on the psycho-physical condition of working women, and consequently, on the quality and results of their work.

Lack of a clear position on the issue of penalties for unethical behaviours in a broad sense, can cause a loss of women's confidence in employers, and thus affect the social relations in organizations. It is worth noting that the analysis of the literature and statistical sources indicate that women's entrepreneurship contributes significantly to economic development. Women, like men have entrepreneurial qualities that allow them to effectively and actively participate in economic processes. Thus, OECD data show that Poland is highly ranked in the ranking of women who are self-employed in the total working population. The rate of women entrepreneurship in Poland is one of the highest in Europe.

According to Z. Mietlewski the situation in Poland is not particularly bad. However, there is a problem of inequality in the labour market, but it is not as clear as in other countries. Over the past few years, women have gained a lot. However, they are still under-represented, especially in the management positions and are also paid less (Gender Index na Warmii i Mazurach, p.3)

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