WOMAN IN THE LABOUR MARKET, IN POST-COMMUNIST ROMANIA

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ABSTRACT: The research was conducted in Petroşani Municipality, on an intentional lot, composed exclusively of women and covered a brief overview of how women perceive their status and their role in society and also the willingness and confidence in their abilities of surpassing “lower condition”, focusing in particular, on their professional life.

KEY WORDS: discrimination in the labour market; female empowerment; socio-professional status; equal opportunities; autonomy and independence

With the transition from the traditional society, in which man was the dominant and productive role, and the woman, although she participated in productive activities, also had to do almost all the household tasks (cooking, childcare, etc.), to the industrial and post-industrial society, characterized by a massive entry of women into employment, was necessary to reconsider both the political, professional, cultural status of woman, and the status and role in the family. In other words the assertion of women on political and professional plan, in public life, requires a reconsideration of the role of family tasks.

Recent studies indicate a number of significant changes in gender relations, but not a “revolution”: it’s rather about developments on a line of continuity, than a break from the traditional behaviour. In most societies known to history, woman was valued not only as the wife-mother, but also as trader.

Despite the strong presence of women in the labour market, they were often viewed as a second-hand workforce, unable to devote fully to the job and carrier, because of their role of being the main provider of domestic services. This aspect led to a high level of gender segregation in employment, a phenomenon strengthened by the lack of acknowledgement of legislation regarding the “equality of chances”.

Women are subjected to an institutionalized sexism (sexual stereotypes, prejudices and discrimination). Although sexual discriminations in access to educational career were legally removed in most developed countries or developing countries, however, in reality, they still exist.

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The answers respondents gave to that question surprise us, because the proportion of those who believes that women have a more difficult access to the labour market is in some disagreement with the reality of Romanian society, whereas as we detail below, at least in functions of a higher hierarchical level women are not easily accede, the main reason being the prejudice that men are more effective in such functions.

There is a widespread distrust of the ability of women to exercise a function of a higher level, starting from the premise that women have a less decision-making compared to men, presuming that men are self-possessed, reacting better in extreme circumstances, whereas women, due to their stronger emotional and affective component wouldn’t be very suitable for leadership roles, decision-making positions involving higher responsibilities.

Regarding the reasons why some respondents believe that women have more difficult access to the labour market, render in figure 2.

Almost half of those, who believe that the difficult access of Romanian women on labour market is a fact of society itself, agree that discrimination in the labour market is the main reason of this state of fact.

The direct discrimination means differential treatment of a person against it, because of him/her belongings to one sex or because of pregnancy, birth, maternity or paternity leave. It is known that women often lack access to different positions, on the motivation that some jobs can be performed only by men.

Shall state that is considered discrimination on the basis of sex and the sexual harassment of a person by another person at work or elsewhere in which it operates. Regarding this practice our research’s subjects agreed on the fact that exists sexual harassment at working place, but the way how women react to these practices has influence on weather these practices will continue or not.

But the major problem that arises relates to the fact that women do not know whose decision-making body or institution must address in such situations and often they do not take any action, because they fear that they could loose even that job where
they are sexual harassed, possibility of finding another good job, in socio-economic condition of nowadays in Romania, being quite small, especially for women.

![Bar chart](chart)

\[A\] – Discrimination in the labour market
\[B\] – Large family responsibilities, that prevent a development of a professional career
\[C\] – The mentality that women should take care of household chores and men should preserve the family financially;
\[D\] – Lower level of training;
\[E\] – Else (there are to be hired only women until a certain age, low offer of prestigious jobs for women)

**Figure 2. The reasons why women have more difficult access to the labour market (%)**

Although it isn’t the main reason reported, however a significant percentage of respondents believe that the women’s access on labour market is slowed down, to some extent, by the fact that women assume, in a widely way, the responsibilities of children’s education, work which not allow them to build a professional career, as most of time they dedicate to the family.

Expectations of subjects regarding the opportunities and conditions their jobs offer is rendered in figure 3.

Respondents wish, in the first place for recognition of professional merits, understanding by this to be motivated extrinsic positively, with praise and appreciation, but mostly by motivator wages or other material rewards. Not less important is the ability of the employer to provide training for employees, this aspect being important also for employees but especially for employer, by achieving a team of skilled specialist, very well trained. It is interesting the fact that women want to have challenging conditions at work, training opportunities and promotion, which prove the fact that women are not passive employees, but on contrary they want to gain access as high as possible in professional hierarchy, they wish for leading positions and want to be competent professionals.
In nowadays society’s conditions it is very difficult to support a family when there is only one member bringing its income, usually the man. That is why more and more women got a job and some of them even managed to build solid careers. Women have realised that economic independence from the spouse or family it’s what gives them power and freedom to live their own lives and to not allow of being leaded by someone else.
More than half of the women work mainly to gain their financial autonomy, in such way they are able to separate from their families or conclude easier a marriage that is no longer working. Economic independence gives women higher possibility to be heard, to express their opinions and stop being so tolerant with the multitude of failures that may occur in the family living (violent husbands, alcoholic fathers, etc). On the other way, it is known that women, as a social group, are hired especially in the fields where wages are lowest, leading to what sociologists call “feminisation of poverty”. As regards the areas where women would manage better than men, there is a wide consensus from subjects that these areas are in order of frequency: teaching and education, social protection and social assistance, financial and banking sectors, that is exactly those fields of activities which are traditionally reserved mostly to the women and are based on activities that involve working with children, with underprivileged people or activities which largely involve public relations, taking in consideration the fact that women have a higher oratorical capacity.

It is a fact that the vast majority of employees in education are women. In regards with women inclination to the domain of social protection and social assistance it is envisaged that women are more sensitive, having perhaps a greater empathic capacity to understand people in difficulty, to show compassion and help others and regarding the financial and banking domains these are fields of activities where women are considered more suitable.

The percentage rather low of women which are working by vocation, because they need a social life, or because that profession gives them a high prestige, being probably well paid in the same time, point out, once again, that women get, generally speaking, jobs with a low prestige.

A – It is necessary of understanding and agreement between spouses, so that family life not to be affected;
B – The woman is capable to manage also familial obligations;
C – Family life is highly affected;
D – It is preferable that woman takes care of family in the first place and career second.

*Figure 5. The influence of woman’s political or professional career on family life (%)*
Almost two thirds of respondents declared that, when woman has a political or professional career it is necessary that relations between the two partners or spouses to be based on understanding and mutual agreement to avoid the situation when interfamilial conflicts may occur because of this.

Almost a third of subjects believe that women are able to accomplish their family’s duties, managing in the same time also working programme, which is not always 8 hours, without this leading to conflicts or family problems or working problems.

Family life is not affected if the wife has a political or professional career, if there is understanding and agreement between spouses, so in that case, accepted by the vast majority of subjects, woman is able to have a successful professional career, but also a harmonious family life.

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