

## *Women's Equality in Families, in the Labor Market and in Management in Poland in Young People's Opinions – Assessment of the Current Situation and Perspectives*

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### ABSTRACT

The work presents the result of a questionnaire study of 1008 pupils of secondary schools (post-gymnasium level) located in Poland. The purpose of the research was to determine young people's perception of gender inequality and stereotypical roles of men and women in family life, in the labor market and management in Poland. The research was conducted so as to allow for a data analysis considering the young respondents' sex and place of residence (countryside, towns, cities). The comparative analysis of girls' and boys' awareness of gender inequality was performed with the statistical IBM SPSS software package. T-student analysis for two independent groups and single-factor ANOVA were applied for comparisons concerning place of residence.

It turned out that the respondents were not fully aware of the existing symptoms of gender inequality concerning the roles of men and women in family life and at the labor market. Girls' awareness of equality issues in Poland was significantly larger than in the case of boys. More often did girls perceive symptoms of gender inequality; they were also more aware of how stereotypes work. A significant part of male respondents failed to notice any problem of gender inequality or underestimated it. In this respect, no differences were identified in relation to place of residence. The research confirmed that the gender inequality problem is still insufficiently exposed, controlled and promoted in Polish schools, homes and society.

*Keywords:* gender inequality, young people, Poland

### INTRODUCTION

The problem of the youth's perception of inequality regarding gender roles in the family, the labor market and management, in both social discourse, and the vast majority of research and analyses are treated rather superficially. Research studies in this area are not numerous, making it even harder to perform the analysis of the problem. Given the low rate and extent of changes happening in the field of gender equality, it is in the youth where opportunities to improve the situation in the future should be seen.

Against this background, an interesting research problem presented itself, which took the form of the following question. What are the symptoms of gender inequality concerning the roles of women and men in the family and the labor market in Poland as perceived by young people? Unfortunately, this issue in the Polish situation is poorly understood, yet crucial. Without this knowledge, it is impossible to change stereotypes and make a difference for the better.

This paper is, therefore, an attempt to respond to the emerging needs. As a result of these

considerations, the aim of the study has been outlined, which is to establish the symptoms of gender inequality concerning the roles of women and men in family life and the labor market in Poland, as perceived by the youth.

The results presented in this paper are part of broader research conducted among young people participating in the project entitled "EQUAL COMIC BOOK – national campaign for equal access to employment" implemented by the European Social Fund and national public contribution, under the Operational Program of Human Capital 2007-2013, agreement no. UDA-POKL 01.05.00-00-461/12-00.78.

### **THE STATE OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN AND MEN - POLAND IN COMPARISON TO THE EUROPEAN UNION AND OECD**

Despite multi-annual activities undertaken by governmental and nongovernmental organizations in the world, including the European Union, the UN and the OECD for gender equality, it failed to be achieved. The analysis of statistics leave no doubt about that (Gender Equality Index 2013; Hausmann, Tyson, Bekhouche and Zahidi 2014). According to The Global Gender Gap Report 2014, in none of the 142 countries, there is equality between men and women. The Global Gender Gap indicator compares the equality between women and men in areas such as participation in the labor market, remuneration for equal work, economic participation and opportunities, taking positions of legislative nature, of senior officials, of managers, the indicator of literary activity, involvement in parliament and ministerial positions. The most favorable is the situation in Iceland (0.8594, where 1 means equality), Finland (0.8453) and Norway (0.8374), and the worst in Yemen (0.025). In global terms, women have almost equal opportunities in areas such as education (0.99) and health (0.97). Much less favorable is the situation in the economy (0.68), the worst – in political life (0.16). According to the forecasts, for the full equality of professional life, women will have to wait until 2095 r. (Hausmann, Tyson, Bekhouche and Zahidi 2014, 7).

Similarly, unfavorable is the situation in the countries of the European Union. According to recent reports, the average value of Gender Equality Index for the countries of the European Union (U-27) was 54.0 (on a scale from 1 – total lack of equality to 100 – full equality). The best situation is in Sweden (74.3), Finland (73.4) and Denmark (73.6). The countries in the worst situation are Bulgaria (37) and Romania (35.3). Poland occupies 17th place with an indicator of 44.1, well below the EU average (Gender Equality Index – Country profiles 2013). A breakdown of the Gender Equality Index shows that the condition of inequality of women in relation to men in various areas is different, although equality was not observed in any field.

The situation of women in management and decision-making seems particularly bad (Hausmann, Tyson, Bekhouche and Zahidi 2014; Vinnicombe, Doldor and Turner 2014; Gender balance on corporate boards 2014; Gender Equality Index 2013; Catalyst Census 2013; Kupczyk 2013a, 2013b, The Gender Equity Index 2013).

The existing inequalities confirmed by the statistical data are also reflected in the citizens' opinions. A majority of Europeans think that gender inequalities are widespread in their country:

- Around three in five Europeans (62%) believe that inequalities between men and women are widespread in their country, with around one in ten (11%) thinking they are 'very widespread.' Around a third of Europeans (34%) think gender inequalities in their country are rare, but only a tiny minority (6%) believe they are 'very rare.'
- Opinions on the prevalence of gender inequalities are virtually unchanged since 2009, although Europeans are now slightly less likely to think gender inequalities are 'very widespread' (down from 15% in 2009 to 11% in 2014) and slightly more likely to believe they are 'fairly widespread' up from 47% in 2009 to 51% in 2014).
- Women are more likely than men to say that gender inequalities are widespread (68% vs. 57%).
- Young people aged 15-24 say that men and women are equally likely to experience inequalities (32%) or that gender inequalities do not exist (31%) (Gender equality. Report 2015, 7-13).

Poland is one of the six EU countries, where there has been an increase in the percentage of people who believe that gender inequalities are now more common than ten years ago (since 2009 it has grown by 6 points – from 17% to 23%) (Gender equality. Report 2015, 11).

A conclusion drawn from the data mentioned above is that despite all the efforts undertaken internationally and in Poland, equality of opportunities for women and men failed to be achieved. More importantly, the majority of citizens are aware of it. However, the number of those who are not aware of the problem is still too high, especially among young people.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The last century, in particular, the latter half, saw radical shifts in the roles of men and women in society. The development of appropriate gender-related roles behaviours and the perception of gender inequality has been an important issue for adolescents of all nations. Of particular interest to adolescents are the familial roles and responsibilities of men and women, as well as their roles in the labor market. While there are many studies of the gender role attitudes of American adolescents, there have been few cross-national studies of adolescents younger than

college age (Gibbons, Stiles and Shkodriani 1991, 626).

In their research, Tinklin, Croxford, Ducklin and Frame (2005) investigate the views of Scottish adolescents on work and family roles, exploring both their general views on gender roles and their personal aspirations for the future. In general, young people believe that it is equally important for males and females to get good qualifications at school and to have rewarding careers. They believe men and women could do any job they wanted to these days. They also think that childcare should be a joint responsibility. However, they see inequalities around them in the workplace and their families. Adolescents still choose fairly gender-typical subjects at school and aspire to different types of occupations. Despite the significant effort that has been made in changing attitudes towards gender equality, there is still a long way to go before equal opportunities are achieved.

Despite the recent political, social, and economic changes in Europe over the last twenty years, traditional views and stereotypes about gender preferences and roles are still prevalent in today's youth's perceptions. A recent study conducted by Japaridze, Zhghenti, Barkaia and Amashukeli (2013) provides insight regarding gender attitudes and stereotypes among Georgian youths and examines the influence of gender, education, the type of settlement (urban vs. rural), religion and employment on these gender views. The research results revealed that young people reported high levels of traditional gender-role attitudes, where both girls and boys had gender stereotype biases, for example, a preference to have a son, gender distribution in education and employment, family gender roles, and women's private lives. In most cases, young women and men were unanimous in reporting this gender bias, yet gender, education, and the type of settlement appeared to affect views regarding gender equality in various spheres of social life, whereas religion and employment had indirect effects.

Another study, conducted by Kilroe (2009), provided some insight into which factors individuals perceive to play a role in determining gender role ideology and behavior in the current South African context. The research revealed that even in more liberal sectors of society, social elements related to unequal power distribution between the sexes still exist. "In particular culture, religion and the family were found to be spheres of the perpetuation of more traditional roles, while globalisation, education, media, work and urbanisation appeared to be significant constructs in creating more egalitarian gender role ideologies" (Kilroe 2009, 1).

There are, however, some encouraging findings on the Canadian youth's attitudes towards traditional gender stereotypes and inequalities (Canadian Youth Perceptions on Gender

Roles and Inequalities 2011). Young people in Canada (91 %) believe equality between men and women is good for both boys and girls. A majority of the Canadian youth (96 %) believe girls should have the same opportunities and rights as boys to make their choices in life. They also believe (95 %) parents must take equal responsibility for their children. Furthermore, six-in-ten young Canadians (60 %) think gender should not determine whether someone does or does not receive employment at school, in government, or top companies. The figures collected in a similar survey conducted in Rwanda and India are considerably lower.

In general, the literature review results indicate that despite recent economic, social and cultural changes, gender inequality still exists and it is evident in many developing and developed countries around the world. What is more, it exists in varying degrees across countries. Ultimately, gender-based differences have a profound effect on economic opportunities for men and women, the productivity of men's and women's labor, the performance and potential of their businesses, as well as the roles they play in families.

International studies show that most prejudices and stereotypes that may have an impact on gender inequality appear in the work environment (EU: 51%, Poland 37%), advertising (EU: 34%, Poland 20%), media (EU: 33 %, Poland 27%) and at school (EU: 16%, Poland 12%) (Gender equality. Report 2015, 28). Young learners aged 15 and over think alike, although a significant difference can be seen in two areas: advertising (EU average: 34%, learning young people in the EU: 26%) and media (EU average: 33%, young learners in the EU: 26%) (Gender equality. Report 2015, 33). This may indicate that prejudices and stereotypes concerning the role of women exist to a lesser extent in those areas than it does regarding the role of women and men in the family and the labor market.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The aim of the research was to determine the symptoms of gender inequality perceived by the youth, concerning the roles of women and men in the family and the labor market in Poland. Young people in the study were defined as secondary school students (post-gymnasium level). In the phase of research preparation, the following hypotheses were assumed:

1. Young people do not fully comprehend current gender inequalities in the family and the labor market in Poland.
2. There are differences in this respect from the point of view of the adolescents' gender and place of residence.

The verification of the assumed hypotheses was conducted using empirical research, quantitative and qualitative, based on a structured questionnaire sheet. The research was

conducted in the years 2014 and 2015 on a sample of 1008 secondary school students (upper secondary) located in Poland. The sample selection took into account two criteria: gender and place of residence (rural, small and big cities). The research involved 600 girls and 408 boys. The structure of the respondents' place of residence was as follows: 438 people from villages, 308 people from the towns with up to 50,000 inhabitants, 108 people from cities with 50.001-100.000 inhabitants, 55 people from cities with 100.001-500.000 residents and 58 people from cities with over 500.000 inhabitants. Due to the limitations resulting from the realisation of the project, which included young people, purposive sampling was applied. The executed research was, therefore, of idiographic nature, which means that the conclusions apply only to the study population.

Statistical methods for data analysis were used to develop the data. A comparative analysis regarding perceived symptoms of gender inequalities between girls and boys was performed using the IBM SPSS statistical package. T-student statistics were used for the two independent groups, and one-way ANOVA was applied for comparisons considering the place of residence. The study assumed that the Polish youth's perception of gender inequalities would be measured based opinions expressed regarding the following statements (which were most often chosen in preliminary tests carried out beforehand).

1. Women do more housework and childcare activities and are more involved in caregiving of children during their illness (they take sick leave).
2. Women are at a disadvantage in the labor market (lower level of employment rates than men and perceived to be less flexible and reliable employees).
3. Women are underrepresented in managerial positions and decision-making bodies, as they have limited access to them.
4. Women earn less for the same work than men.
5. It is recognized that men have less impact on the upbringing of their children than women.
6. Expectations of boys and girls in school are often distinct, compelling them to a particular way of behavior and choice of activities.
7. This leads to the perpetuation of stereotypes and gender roles in school textbooks, games and the organization of lessons.

The respondents also had the opportunity to enter their proposals regarding perceived symptoms of gender inequality, but they proved to be less numerous and very heterogeneous. To measure the level of gender inequality in Poland perceived by the youth on a determined scale, the assumption was made that if the subject selected a given element (of the above mentioned), then "1" would be entered, and if not – then "0". Thus, the maximum number of

points that could be scored in a given question was 7, and the average of responses was between 0 and 7. So, if the average for the entire sample in this question amounted to 3.28, this means that on a scale of 0 to 7 the degree of perceiving gender inequality by young people in Poland amounts to 3.28.

## RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

The tested adolescents perceive multiple symptoms of gender inequalities concerning the roles of women and men in the family and in the labor market in Poland, especially such as (Tables 1.1 to 1.7):

- women do more housework and activities related to childcare, and they more often take care of children during their illness (taking sick leave) – 80.5% of the respondents, of which 64% are girls and 36% boys;
- women are at a disadvantage on the labor market (employment rates lower than men's, recognizing women as less discretionary and more unreliable employees) – 60% of the respondents, of which 63% are girls and 37% boys;
- women are underrepresented in managerial positions and decision-making bodies, as they have limited access to them – 38% of the respondents, of which 64% are girls and 36% boys;
- women earn less than men for the same work– 55% of the respondents, of which 64% are girls and 36% boys;
- men have less impact than women on the upbringing of their children – 42% of the respondents, of which 59% are girls, and 41% boys;
- expectations of boys and girls are different – that is the opinion held by less than 31% of the respondents (59% girls, 41% boys).
- there is perpetuation of stereotypes and gender roles in school textbooks, games and the organization of lessons – 22% of the respondents (54% girls, 56% boys).

The average score on the scale of the perception of gender inequality in Poland by the surveyed youth amounted to 3.28 on a scale from 0 to 7 ([Table 1.8](#)). The girls perceive significantly more inequality than boys:  $t(1005) = -3.09, p < .01$ . The average score on the scale of the perception of gender inequalities for girls was 3.42 (SD = 1.68) and for boys 3.08 (SD = 1.74). Univariate analysis of variance (One-Way ANOVA) showed that there were no statistically significant differences between the researched adolescents living in a village or a city (regardless of its size) with regard to perceiving gender inequality ( $F(4, 1002) = .53, p > .05$ ).

The above results indicate that the surveyed young people do not have full awareness of existing gender inequalities regarding the roles of women and men in the family and the

labor market. This applies to both boys and girls, although the latter see more symptoms of gender inequality. A significant number of boys did not see the problem or underestimated it. No differences relating to the place of residence of the youth were identified. Thus the situation looks unfavorable both in villages, towns and cities. This may mean that to a large extent, the stereotypes perpetuated in families, schools and the media (television, the internet, etc.) are accountable for this unfavorable situation. It is surprising that such a large percentage of the participants in the study does not see the following indications of gender inequality in Poland:

- 20% do not recognize that women do more housework and childcare activities and often also take care of children during their illness (take sick leave);
- 40% do not see that women are at a disadvantage on the labor market;
- 45% do not recognize that women earn less for the same work than men;
- 62% do not see that women are underrepresented in managerial positions and decision-making bodies.

The study revealed that it still often happens that different expectations are raised towards boys and girls in schools, and a certain way of behavior and choice of activities is often imposed on them. There are also situations in which there is a persistence of stereotypes and gender roles in school textbooks, games and the organization of lessons in schools.

### **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

The performed diagnosis allowed a positive verification of the first assumed hypotheses, namely that young people are not entirely aware that there are gender inequalities in the family and the labor market in Poland. The second hypothesis was confirmed only partially. Significant differences have been identified in the above respect regarding gender criterion. No differences were observed relating to the place of residence of the youth.

The research results indicate that the state of awareness of young people about the problems of gender equality in Poland is rather mediocre. While they perceive inequality in homes, where women do more housework and activities related to taking care of children, the vast majority do not realize that women are at a disadvantage on the labor market, being paid less than men for the same work and are underrepresented in managerial positions and decision-making bodies.

The youth is still too unaware of the indication of inequality, according to which it is recognized that men have less impact on the upbringing of their children than women. This situation may slow down the expected changes in the future for the equalization of opportunities for equality in the family and the labor market. If young people do not see the current problem,



they will not be able to counteract it when they enter the labor market and start their families,

The lack of relationship between the perception of gender inequalities and place of residence (rural, small and large cities) may indicate that families bear the responsibility to a large extent for the perpetuation of stereotypes (Dzierzgowska and Rutkowska 2008, 6). Schools, advertising and the media are also responsible for the perpetuation of stereotypes (Gender equality. Report 2015, 28).

The results of research and statistics on gender equality in Poland, which are lower than the average for the European Union and the world indicate to some extent the low effectiveness of existing measures to improve the situation. This means that the problem of gender inequality still exists in schools, homes and society in Poland and that it is insufficiently exposed, controlled and promoted.

Gender equality and full involvement of women in the professional, social and political areas, as well as the impact of fathers on the upbringing of children, constitute a huge potential that should not be wasted. Certainly, it will eventually be spotted by young people. It is, therefore, necessary to expand youth education in gender equality issues, disseminate best practices, standards and benefits and eliminate stereotypes. The literature research has shown that the indications of gender inequality perceived today by the youth, not only in Poland, are still a poorly explored phenomenon. It should, therefore, be considered necessary to continue theoretical and empirical exploration in this area, which would allow to rationalize the methodology of research, organise ideas and above all to monitor the situation.

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## APPENDIX

*Table 1.1.* Women do more housework and childcare activities and often also they take care of children during their illness (take sick leave).

		Man	Woman	Total
No	Amount	113	84	197
	% z 1.1.	57,40%	42,60%	100,00%
Yes	Amount	295	516	811
	% z 1.1.	36,40%	63,60%	100,00%
Total	Amount	408	600	1008
	% z 1.1.	40,50%	59,50%	100,00%

Source: own research

*Table 1.2.* Women are at a disadvantage on the labor market (lower employment rates than men's, the recognition of women as less flexible and more unreliable employees).

		Man	Woman	Total
No	Amount	183	217	400
	% z 1.2.	45,80%	54,30%	100,00%
Yes	Amount	225	382	607
	% z 1.2.	37,10%	62,90%	100,00%
Total	Amount	408	599	1007
	% z 1.2.	40,50%	59,50%	100,00%

Source: own research

*Table 1.3.* Women are underrepresented in managerial positions and decision-making bodies, as have limited access to them.

		Man	Woman	Total
No	Amount	273	356	629
	% z 1.3.	43,40%	56,60%	100,00%
Yes	Amount	135	244	379
	% z 1.3.	35,60%	64,40%	100,00%
Total	Amount	408	600	1008
	% z 1.3.	40,50%	59,50%	100,00%

Source: own research

*Table 1.4.* Women earn less for the same work than men.

		Man	Woman	Total
No	Amount	211	246	457
	% z 1.4.	46,20%	53,80%	100,00%
Yes	Amount	197	354	551
	% z 1.4.	35,80%	64,20%	100,00%
Total	Amount	408	600	1008
	% z 1.4.	40,50%	59,50%	100,00%

Source: own research

*Table 1.5.* Men have less impact on the upbringing of their children than women.

		Man	Woman	Total
No	Amount	234	353	587
	% z 1.5.	39,90%	60,10%	100,00%
Yes	Amount	174	247	421
	% z 1.5.	41,30%	58,70%	100,00%
Total	Amount	408	600	1008
	% z 1.5.	40,50%	59,50%	100,00%

Source: own research

*Table 1.6.* Expectations of boys and girls are different

		Man	Woman	Total
No	Amount	234	353	587
	% z 1.6.	39,90%	60,10%	100,00%
Yes	Amount	174	247	421
	% z 1.6.	41,30%	58,70%	100,00%
Total	Amount	408	600	1008
	% z 1.6.	40,50%	59,50%	100,00%

Source: own research

*Table 1.7.* The perpetuation of stereotypes and gender roles in school textbooks, games and the organization of lessons

		Man	Woman	Total
No	Amount	305	479	784
	% z 1.7.	38,90%	61,10%	100,00%
Yes	Amount	103	121	224
	% z 1.7.	46,00%	54,00%	100,00%
Total	Amount	408	600	1008
	% z 1.7.	40,50%	59,50%	100,00%

Source: own research

*Table 1.8.* Perceived by the youth gender inequalities concerning the roles of women and men in the family, in the labor market and in management in Poland.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Average	Standard deviation
Perceived by the youth gender inequalities concerning the roles of women and men in the family, in the labor market and in management in Poland	1007	0	7	3,282	1,7124

Source: own research