

Behavioral Motivations of Gender Discrimination on the Labor Market in Romania*

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Abstract. *Gender discrimination can be explained at the level of segregation on the labor market by the employers' perceptions about male and female workforce, by the level of development of a country, employers and employees.*

In any society, people are categorized from the attributes (stereotypical or not) which are supposed to be shared with their own group. Usually these attributes are anticipated based on stereotypes conveyed on behalf of different groups (Goffman, 1974). Stereotypes are those beliefs and opinions about the characteristics of men and women. The features associated with the two groups generally show us not only how men and women are perceived, and also how it should be. Stereotyping can be the basis for the discriminatory treatment in most cases (Linville, Salovey, Fisher, 1986).

In this article we presented the main theories that can explain the wage discrimination and we analyzed the discriminatory attitudes of gender on the Romanian labor market using the Economic and social cohesion survey⁽¹⁾

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1. The study of specialty literature

By discrimination we understand any distinction, exclusion, restriction, preference or different treatment that disadvantages a person or group, as compared with others in similar situations. The reasons underlying the discrimination may be diverse, such as: race, nationality, ethnicity, religion, sex, sexual orientation, language, age, disability, etc., and in this case we speak of multiple discriminations (The ethnographic research on the multiple discriminations, ANES, 2007). Discrimination is a general feature of social life, based on the existence of certain prejudices. The prejudice phenomenon involves the rejection of the other person, regarded as a member of a group against who there are shown negative feelings.

The social identity theory (Tajfel, 1971) introduces the distinction between the in group and the out group, and between the group membership and the group represented by “the others”. This means that individuals tend to favor their own group against others. The empirical studies (Zamfir, 2007) showed that women in Romania are associated rather with the family sphere, the private space respectively, while men are associated with professional life and leadership.

The research conducted so far has identified the existence of several types of discrimination. Banton (1998) made a distinction between the direct and indirect discrimination. The direct discrimination occurs when two people with the same level of training and similar jobs are paid differently. The indirect discrimination is based on a previous decision that two people with the same level of training receive different wages because they were employed on different positions or at different time. Kirshna Mallick (1995) suggests two other types of discrimination at a group and individual level. Group discrimination is different from individual discrimination, which is independent of the group members. On the labor market group discrimination is evident when the average wage of the group is not proportional to the average productivity.

The discrimination on the labor market can also occur “before entering the labor market” in which case we speak of pre-discrimination. This means that the chances of an individual's personal development do not depend on his/her skills. We speak thus of inequality of opportunity, which is due to the social environment which each individual comes from.

Wage discrimination can be explained by gender segregation between activity sectors, professions, jobs and hierarchical positions. These differences can be explained: through compensatory differences which may vary from one sector to another, through the efficiency wage practiced by corporations to monitor the employees and to reduce the rate of rotation of workers etc. Discrimination can be explained based on two theories: the theory of preference and the statistical discrimination.

A. The theory of preference for discrimination

Becker (1957) believes that the utility of workers who are part of a group is influenced by the relationships they maintain with members of other social groups. On the labor market there are two types of agents that may exhibit a “taste” for discrimination; they are, on the one hand, the employers, and on the other hand the employees. Becker (1971) analyzed the discrimination determined by employers based on the following scenario: let us suppose we have two groups:

- group 1 consisting only of men;
- group 2 consisting only of women.

The two groups are perfectly substitutable in production, even if for the company, to hire a worker from the group 2, implies psychological costs that would not have had if the company had hired a worker from the group 1. Any non-pecuniary cost paid by the employer will lead to increased wage costs. For example, if the cost of salary for workers in group 1 is equal to w , for workers in group 2 it will be $(1+d_i)w$. The d_i value (called the Becker's discrimination coefficient) measures the “preference” of an employer for a certain worker. Coefficient d_i is very difficult to measure because it is different from one employer to another and may depend on the nature of the workplace, and in this case it is inserted d_{ij} coefficient (where j shows us the work place). This type of discrimination usually occurs in the decisions of employers regarding recruitment of workers belonging to different groups.

Suppose that the salary of members of the group 1 is equal to w_1 , and for the members in group 2 is equal to w_2 . For an employer “I” we had the following situation:

- $w_1 < w_2(1+d_i)$, if the members in group 1 will be recruited;
- $w_1 > w_2(1+d_i)$, if the members in group 2 will be recruited;
- $w_1 = w_2(1+d_i)$, if the employer does not have any preference which group to recruit from.

Where employees have a discriminatory attitude towards other workers (eg, to women) they will receive a salary w_1 (as in the previous case). They believe however that they will receive a salary equal to $w_1(1-d'_i)$, where d'_i shows us the psychological cost. Where the two groups of employees (group 1 and group 2) are complementary or imperfect substitutable setting a balance will generate an increase in wages in group 1 and a decrease in group 2. If the firm will hire workers from both groups to keep those who are part of the group 1, it will have to offer them a higher wage to motivate them. This "bonus" is financed by reducing the wage of the less skilled workers. *Discrimination by interest* can also be determined by consumers, when they prefer a certain product from certain companies.

B. Statistical discrimination

Employers can not directly observe the productivity level of candidates in a vacancy job, but they can see certain features, such as professional training (Spencer). In the model developed by Phelps (1972) firms employ workers based on a performance test y , which can provide information about the real productivity of workers, q . In this case we can write that:

$$y_i = q_i + \mu_i, \quad (1)$$

Where:

μ_i -error

If we estimate the above equation we get:

$$\hat{q}_i = (1 - b^*)\bar{q} + b^* y_i \quad (2)$$

In the above equation, b^* takes values between 0 and 1 and shows the correlation between y and q . If $b^* < 1$ it is possible that a minority group worker who is well prepared to win less than a worker in the majority group, which is less efficient. In reality, the statistical discrimination can occur in two situations:

- a) For recent emigrants who have very different linguistic and cultural profiles, and in this case may they get low scores in performance tests;
- b) For women, especially those leaving the labor market for a long time.

2. The empirical analysis

For the analysis of gender discriminatory attitudes on the labor market in Romania, we used the Economic and Social Cohesion survey. The survey results show that Romanians attaches great importance to the job that they rank the second place after the family (Figure 1).

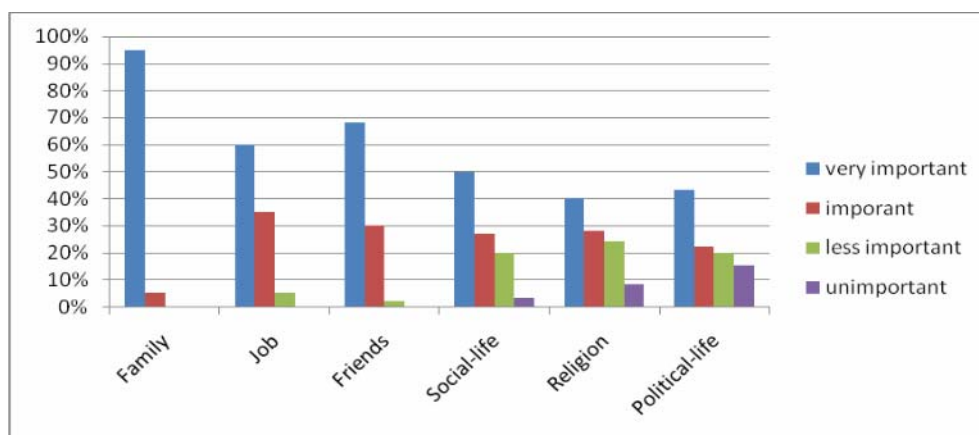


Figure 1. How important are these things for your life (%)

However, the differentiation between female and male responses to this question reveals important nuances in attitudes between them on the most important things in life (Figure 2). First there is a more serious attitude of women than men, because the family is the most important for women (60.9%) and the job is the second (57.4%). Men pay greater attention to the job than to the family (42.6% to 39.1%). We can therefore say that men are more entrenched in extra-familial activities, while women are more traditional and instead attached to the household.

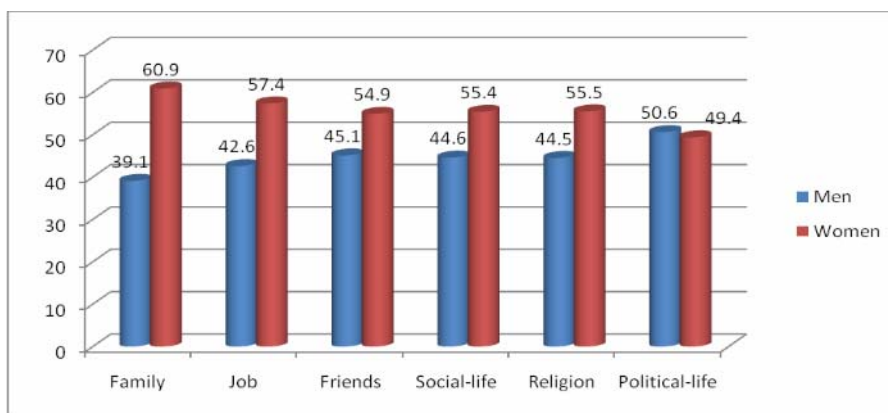


Figure 2. *The importance of things in life (%)*

In the choice between household and work the attitude difference is significant: the majority of men (54%) believe that women should sacrifice work for family care, while only 44% of women would accept this situation (Figure 3).

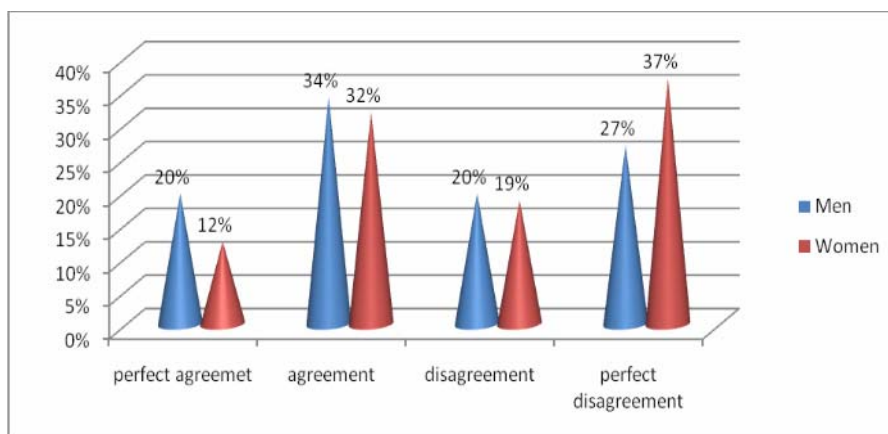


Figure 3. *A woman should be ready to give up work to take care of the family*

The difference in attitude is positive to men also regarding the priority of employment for a job in economic crisis (Figure 4). However, there is a noticeable split in the attitudes of women in two categories which are at the total opposite poles: those who agree that man should have priority in getting a job (29%) and those that are in total disagreement (26%).

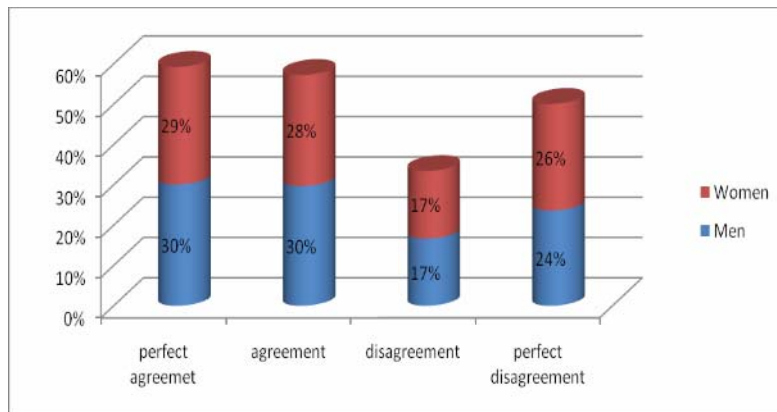


Figure 4. Agreement/Disagreement of women and men on the following question: *When there is a crisis of jobs, men should be given priority in getting a job*

The figure below indicates the best our attitude substrate of gender discrimination in the labor market. The reported trend is observed better correlation with the question: "husband should be the main earner of income in the family» (Figure 5). The differences in responses are clearly favorable to men, 81% of them agreeing with this statement, and 56% of women (which shows a low level of their empowerment).

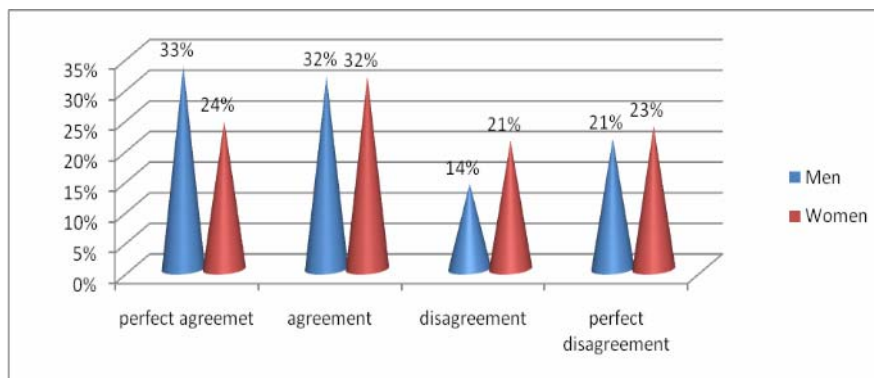


Figure 5. Agreement/Disagreement of women and men on the following question: *husband should be the main earner of income in the family?*

In terms of labor market participation of the two groups, the female respondents work mainly without legal forms (63.6%) or not working, while men work with legal forms or occasional. The preference for this type of employment among women may in time lead to discrimination against them on the labor market.

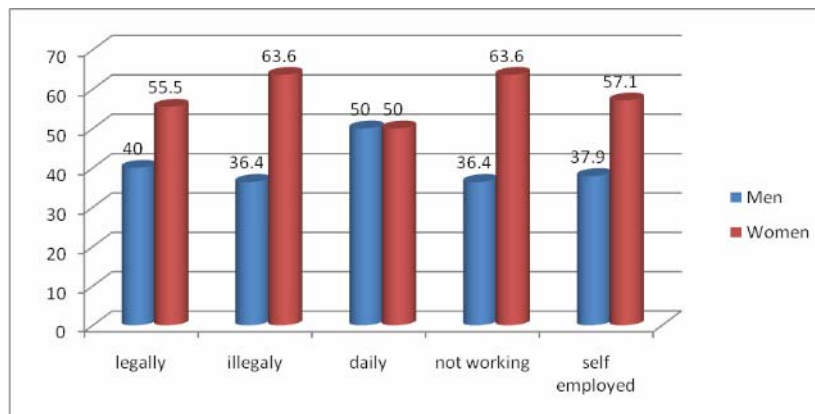


Figure 6. *The way of working on the labor market*

3. Conclusions

We can say that gender discrimination is highly dependent on the attitude of men and women towards the labor market, and this imbalance should be considered both in terms of the discriminated one, and of the one who discriminates. The analysis of these attitudes in Romania's case shows that there is a very consistent attitude basis that helps potential gender discrimination, even if the wage gap between women and men is not so large (with a downward dynamic in recent years). Men are more anchored in extra-familial activities and pay more attention to the job, however women are more traditional and attached to household.

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Note

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