

**ICEST 2021****II International Conference on Economic and Social Trends for Sustainability of Modern Society****DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN IN THE MODERN LABOR  
MARKET: SPECIFICS AND CONTRADICTIONS**

Yuliya Kostrova (a), Olga Shibarshina (b)\*, Irina Sattarova (c), Alexey Martynushkin (d)

\*Corresponding author

(a) Ryazan branch of Moscow Witte University, Ryazan, Russia, ubkostr@mail.ru

(b) Ryazan branch of Moscow Witte University, 62 Pervomaysky Avenue, Ryazan, Russia, oshibarshina@mail.ru

(c) Ryazan branch of Moscow Witte University, Ryazan, Russia, sattarova.i.v@mail.ru

(d) Ryazan State Agrotechnological University Named after P.A. Kostychev, Ryazan, Russia, martynushkin@mail.ru

**Abstract**

The aim of the present research is to analyze discrimination against women in the labour market and to identify its features which affect economically active female population. The study was directed at the economically active female representatives living in the city of Ryazan. The subject of the study was to identify specifics of discrimination against women in the labour market. The main volume of information on the problem mentioned was obtained using a questionnaire survey. This method formed the basis for the survey of economically active female representatives living in the city of Ryazan using the Google Form application. The main empirical indicators were the level of awareness and occurrence of discrimination against women in the labour market, the opinion of the economically active female population concerning their professional carrier as well as their attitude towards the measures of state support. The authors arrived at the conclusion that the reasons of gender discrimination in the labour market lie in the imperfection of the legal system, the existed stereotypes and prejudices and in a number of economic causes. At the same time, the measures of the State directed at the protection of women's rights and their support in case of discrimination against them in the labour market appear not to be effective enough.

2357-1330 © 2021 Published by European Publisher.

*Keywords:* Gender discrimination, women, employment, labour market



This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 Unported License, permitting all non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

## 1. Introduction

Discrimination is defined as unequal opportunities in the labor market for a group of workers distinguished according to a definite feature and demonstrating similar working efficiency compared to other workers (group discrimination) or unequal opportunities for individual workers compared to those with similar quality characteristics of labour power (individual discrimination).

Several types of discrimination can be singled out in the labor market according to the incidence or the results.

Discrimination in case of employment (or, on the contrary, in case of dismissal) takes place when representatives of some group of population are first to be employed or dismissed, while other terms and conditions being similar. It mainly refers to women, particularly to those of childbearing age.

Discrimination in access to certain professions or positions occurs when the access to some activities, professions and positions is prohibited or restricted for a definite group of population despite their ability to perform such kind of work. It is reflected, for example, in job advertisements: despite the ban on discrimination in labor legislation the number of vacancy announcements based on gender criteria has increased by 40 percent in recent years.

Discrimination in remuneration of labor occurs when labor payment for the same work is lower for some workers compared to others, that is, when differences in remuneration are not related to differences in labour efficiency. This type of discrimination has already persisted for many years.

Discrimination in career development occurs when the workers in the discriminated group are restricted in vertical mobility. The phenomenon of “glass ceiling” can be revealed in politics, economics (both at state enterprises and in business) and in administration.

Discrimination in education or professional training can be revealed either as restriction of access to education and vocational training or as provision of educational services of lower quality. This type of discrimination cannot be fully referred to labor discrimination since educational process precedes labor activity. But despite the “pre-labor” nature of this type of discrimination its causes and consequences are closely related to the functioning of the labour market. Perhaps, the signs of discrimination are least of all demonstrated in this sphere: the average level of education in Russian women is higher than that of men.

Numerous analyses of the assessments of gender discrimination given by both workers and employers show that it is discrimination in hiring and firing that is the most urgent type of discrimination in the Russian labor market.

## 2. Problem Statement

The problem of infringement of women's rights by employers seems to be urgent not only in our country but also throughout the world, both in industrialized and third world countries. It may be caused by employer prejudice relative to female working abilities and by their physiological features, as well. It primarily concerns maternity and the resulting “problems”. These include a maternity leave, frequent leaves for child care and the necessity to observe other social obligations relative to a female worker. All these result in gender discrimination in the labour market.

### **3. Research Questions**

The main issues that are analyzed in present research are as follows:

- identification of the essence of labour discrimination and its main types in the labour market;
- identification of contradictions existing in the field of women's employment in the context of gender inequality;
- study of the particularities of gender inequality in the labour market using a questionnaire surveys among women of economically active age in Ryazan;
- generalization of the results of the study and formulating conclusions and proposals within the scope of the subject matter under study.

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to analyze discrimination against women in the labour market and to identify its features effecting the economically active female population.

### **5. Research Methods**

The authors applied general scientific methods to substantiate theoretical statements and to support the conclusions: comparative analysis, scientific generalization, analogy, classification, historicism, system approach as well as private scientific methods of observation and document analysis. The empirical base of the study comprises the results of the analysis of the current sociological information, statistical data of various levels and the results of author's sociological research using a method of questionnaire survey "Analysis of the current female position in the sphere of employment".

### **6. Findings**

Several types of discrimination against women in the modern labor market may currently be distinguished:

- in case of hiring and firing. The employer is most likely to hire a male applicant than a female one. When firing the situation is reversed – a female worker is much more likely to fall under the reduction;
- secret prohibition of the access to a number of professions. It does not concern professions which in compliance with the existing regulations are contraindicated for female workers due to a high level of physical activity. Here we imply "traditionally male-dominated" positions when theoretically women can get this job but in practice it is hardly possible because of employers' prejudice;
- infringement of the rights when setting wages. The amount of payment for the same professional duties often differs significantly between men and women;

- restrictions in career development. Discrimination of sexual character may reveal itself in the appointment to a responsible post or executive position;
- restrictions in the sphere of education when acquiring a certain profession. It manifests itself in preferential admission of male representatives of the population to certain educational institutions.

Nowadays, the increased attention of the society to the female problems both around the world and in the Russian Federation can be explained by quite objective reasons. More than half of the population in our country (53.6% in whole) and 53.8% in the town of Ryazan, in particular, are representatives of the fair sex (Abramov & Sattarova, 2017). Tens of millions of them are economically active (47.7% in Russia and 48.5% in Ryazan), that is why a “female problem” remains urgent to be studied by any of social or economic sciences (Lyashchuk, 2019).

A woman performs several roles at the same time: she is a mother, a keeper of the hearth and an economic unit, as well. However, such multitasking creates a number of difficulties for women’s position in the society. She just needs external support since otherwise it is incorrect to speak about justice and equality of rights with the male population who, as a rule, are not burdened with double load and are focused solely on their realization in the career sphere.

It is hardly worth mentioning that the need for such support increases in time of economic instability. At first glance, the problems of occupation, unemployment and other components of the labor market seem to concern equally men and women. In practice, discrimination according to a gender factor appears to be one of the most urgent problems in the labor market. This can be explained by peculiarities of socio-economic position of women in the modern society as well as by specific character of their work. In this connection the hypothesis has been put forward saying that discrimination against economically active female population is quite widespread and it is characterized by a number of features producing a negative effect both on women under this phenomenon and on the society as a whole.

The problem of gender discrimination is of particular interest in various fields of scientific knowledge and requires a thorough comprehensive study to eliminate the causes and to minimize consequences of this phenomenon. Traditionally, there appeared a number of approaches to the study of the “women’s problem” both worldwide and in Russia, in particular.

Firstly, the problem of discrimination against women has been considered as a matter of exclusively legal nature. Hence, a legal approach has been applied

In psychology the problem is studied both from the point of view of biological differences between men and women and different conceptions concerning standards of behavior of both sexes (Kostrova, 2016).

It is the sociological approach that provides the most comprehensive study of the phenomenon of discrimination against women in all its entirety and complexity of various social aspects and interrelations.

At different times women were forbidden to work at all or the range of professional activity where the representatives of the fair sex could realize themselves was greatly limited. The fact that women have no equal rights with men in political life along with their non-admission to politically and economically significant positions aggravated the problem of unequal rights. However, the situation gradually improved

thanks to formation of various women's unions and associations and their struggle against inequality in all spheres.

In 1975 the First World Conference of Women took place in Mexico where two essential documents were adopted which remain relevant so far: the Declaration on Women's Equality and their Contribution to the Development and Peace, and the World Plan of Activity due to which the Voluntary Foundation for Women was set up in 1977 (The UN Foundation of Development for Women, at present). In 1980 the Second World Conference of Women was held in Copenhagen with participation of representatives from 145 countries where progress was noted with regard to legislation as far as "women's problem" is concerned, though the real state of affairs remained far from ideal (Lyashchuk & Labzenkova, 2019). The Third World Conference of Women was held in 1985 in Nairobi with representatives from 157 countries taking part in it. There it was decided to form the UN Committee on the Status of Women where the reports on the implementation of a number of provisions announced at the conferences were to be considered every two years. The result of the last Fourth World Conference on Women's Status held in Beijing in 1995 with participants already from 190 countries was the adoption of one of the key documents entitled "The Platform of Actions for the Benefit of Equality, Development and Peace" comprising a number of such acute problems as education, health care, violence, refugees, participation in making decisions (Kostrova, 2019b). The following landmark event was the Summit of Millennium in 2000 with the goal to expand the rights and opportunities of women, promote equality between men and women which had to be implemented by 2015 (Kostrova et al., 2019).

Nevertheless, there is still significant gender inequality, e.g. as regards representation of women in political structures at different levels. Thus, currently in Russia there is not a single woman among 85 acting Heads of Subjects. The share of women among the deputies in the State Duma of the VII convocation is 17% (76 people) while that of men is 83% (374 people) (Kostrova, 2016). It is, however, should be emphasized that in a number of countries women-presidents (Latvia, Chile, Norway) and women-prime ministers (Ukraine, USA, Great Britain) have been elected.

It may be considered that the Russian Federation is juridically oriented towards democratization of the society but a reverse picture is actually observed the part of which is unfortunately discrimination against women in the sphere of activity, infringement of their social rights in the political and economical life.

Many jobs are still thought as exclusively "male" or "female". Along with this, there may be reversed discrimination when women are preferred to be employed in case of export-oriented labor-intensive production, in particular. However, this is due to their intrinsic "feminine" characteristics: greater obedience compared to men, agility in performing manual operations, willingness to execute orders, submit to strict discipline, withstand tiresome monotonous work on the assembly line; in addition, they are less likely to join or to form trade unions.

Since the matter of career is quite complicated and multifarious for women it should be studied from different sides.

The importance of women's career for the society in whole should be the first to discuss. A society cannot be considered free or democratic if there is anyone discriminated against in it. In present-day Russia as well as in other countries the problem of female employment is very acute (Kostrova, 2017).

In addition to possible resistance on the part of other people there is another unfavorable factor playing a negative role in women's career development, i.e. a fear not to pay enough attention to the family and children, to hurt her husband's ego if she succeeds in life as the stereotype of a "higher" social status of the husband still exists although researches state that in more than 40% of families wives earn more than their husbands.

Thus, at universities 58% of professional and teaching staff are women but there are only 17% of Rectors, 46% of Heads of Chairs and 42% of Deans of Faculties among them (Kostrova & Shibarshina, 2017).

Gender discrimination is easier to be defined than to be revealed in one or another process or phenomenon since it is characterized not only by economical factors but also by the way of distribution of productive and reproductive role between men and women in the society. In society these conceptions are obvious to be of traditionally patriarchal nature. This is the reason for discriminative attitude of employers as regards women's reproductive role and function which is revealed in their refusal to hire pregnant women and nursing mothers and in their dismissal as well. Due to the fact that pregnancy, childbirth and child-rearing are the share of practically all economically active women all these find the reflection in their professional career. Accordingly, women's employment exerts an impact on their reproductive function and reproductive behavior (Kostrova, 2019a).

## 7. Conclusion

The results of our empirical study allowed us to support the hypothesis that discrimination against economically active female population is quite common and is characterized by some features producing a negative effect both on women under such discrimination and on the society as whole.

A thorough analysis of the results of the empirical study confirmed that situation with discrimination against women in Ryazan labor market is quite widespread. Most of the respondents have encountered this phenomenon at various stages of their professional career for one or another reason. The causes of discrimination lie in the imperfection of the legal system, stereotypes and prejudices against the fair sex as well as in a number of economical problems, while the measures taken by the State in order to protect women's rights and to provide them with assistance in case of discrimination against them in the labor market appear not to be effective enough.

Comprehensive analysis of the results obtained in the course of empirical research made it possible to identify the features specific for discrimination against women in the labor market:

1. Discrimination against women is an urgent and widespread issue, 81% of surveyed women faced this problem. But almost a quarter of them (18%) did not realize the fact of being discriminated against. Such restrictions for a woman are caused by patriarchal prejudices and stereotypes concerning her role as a wife and a mother in the first place, her role as an economic unit being last of all.

2. There is not a single age group of economically active representatives of the fair sex which could be immune from infringement of their rights in the labour market. However, there is a higher risk to be discriminated because of the marital status (married or unmarried women under 35 having no children, those having children less than 10 years of age as well as women on the parental leave). Then potential situations of discrimination go involving career development, professional training and remuneration of

labor. Infringement of rights of this active group of population may cause significant negative consequences since the role of a woman as an employee begins to conflict with her role as a mother which is likely to affect the demographic situation in the country.

3. The most common type of discrimination is that at the recruitment stage as evidenced by a little more than half of the respondents (52%). Married women under 35 having no children are most likely to enter this risk group (84%), unmarried women under 35 with no children, women having children less than 10 years of age and expectant mothers being also in the group of increased risk. The main forms of discrimination revealed are as follows: vacancy announcement include requirements which are not related to experience, the level of education and qualification as well as refusal to employ a woman having children or assuming to start a family and bring up children.

4. The level of discrimination at the workplace is slightly lower: 36% of able-bodied representatives of the fair sex faced it. And again, young women under 35 are most of all subjected to this phenomenon. The basic forms of discrimination at this stage are: compulsion to conform to a certain appearance; imposing unpleasant work which is not a part of employee's duties; disrespectful attitude and disregard on the part of the colleagues. Age of a worker, especially of a young one, is a risk factor to enter a situation of infringement of rights at the workplace.

5. The least number of survey participants were discriminated against at the stage of their dismissal from work (12%). This number involves economically active girls and women who were insisted upon by their employers to quit voluntarily due to their pregnancy, and who were constrained to transfer to another position following their parental leave.

6. An important point is the level of awareness of infringement of rights as it may produce a great effect on willingness to defend these rights. In general, it is not high: at the moment only a third of female respondents (31%) have taken any active steps to change the situation with discrimination against them. The majority either simply accepted the situation (35%) or did not do anything (34%). That is why it is necessary that the level of knowledge of rights should be improved among economically active population

7. The main obstacle in protecting infringed women's rights in the labor market is realization that it is of no sense and will result in nothing. Likewise, about 17% of respondents do not know who they should appeal to and what to do. In this regard, it is essential that activity should be organized to inform public at large about the ways to protect their rights with successful examples of withstanding discrimination

8. The problem that should not be ignored is that one of the main ways to respond to discrimination is dismissal: nearly 35% of respondents choose this way. This indicates either imperfection of existing methods in resolving such situations or a low level of public awareness. Thus, choosing dismissal as the way of solving the problem related to discrimination against them, women, having lost their jobs, find themselves even in a more vulnerable situation which undoubtedly leads to deterioration in the labor market and unemployment.

## References

- Abramov, V. Ya., & Sattarova, I. V. (2017). Demographic situation and its impact on the socio-economic state of the Ryazan region. *Religion and Society: Problems of Interaction. International Scientific and Practical Conference "Religion and Society: Problems of Interaction"*, 49-51.

- Kostrova, Yu. B. (2016). Problems of population employment management in the Ryazan region. *Scientific Works of Moscow University named after S.Yu. Witte. Moscow, Moscow Witte University*, 76-84.
- Kostrova, Yu. B. (2017). To the issue of employment of graduates of educational organizations in the Ryazan Region. *III International Scientific and Practical Conference «Current Issues of Economics, Law and Education in the XXI Century»*, 329.
- Kostrova, Yu. B. (2019a). On the issue of the functioning of the domestic and external labour market. *V International Scientific and Practical Conference Economics, management, law, education in the 21st century: problems, trends and development prospects*, 613-619.
- Kostrova, Yu. B. (2019b). The main directions of optimizing state policy in the field of employment of modern Russian youth. *Scientific electronic journal Meridian*, 6(24), 3-5.
- Kostrova, Yu. B., & Shibarshina, O. Yu. (2017). Formation of a tolerant social environment through social integration. *International Scientific and Practical Conference "Religion and Society: Problems of Interaction"*, 21-23.
- Kostrova, Yu. B., Tuarmensky, V. V., & Shibarshina, O. Yu. (2019). *World experience and trends in the development of social policy and practice*, 271.
- Lyashchuk, Yu. O. (2019). On the issue of personnel support of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation. *Bulletin of Moscow University named after S.Yu. Witte. Series 1: Economics and Management*, 3(30), 82-89.
- Lyashchuk, Yu. O., & Labzenkova, U. V. (2019). The problem of youth employment in the labor market. *VII International Scientific and Practical Conference "Current Problems of Social and Labor Relations"*, 239-241.