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FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO WOMEN'S RELUCTANCE TO WORK PART-TIME

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Purpose: The aim of this article is to show what factors contribute to women's reluctance to work part-time and to what extent. Part-time employment is a characteristic feature of the labour market in many Western European countries. In Poland, this form of employment is much less popular, also among women whom it mainly concerns, even though from the employer's point of view part-time employment along with other forms of flexible work could result in a greater flexibility of an organization.

Design/methodology/approach: Based on the analysis of the source literature, other research and the authors own studies among women (conducted with the use of questionnaires from 71 female respondents), the text explores why this form of employment is not popular in Poland. **Findings:** The results of the analysis point to unsatisfactory levels of income as the main reason; however, the income factor was not the only disadvantage of part-time employment identified by the respondents.

Research limitations/implications: Due to the size of the research sample, the results cannot be generalized for the whole population. This study provides a basis for further research.

Practical implications: The results constitute an important contribution to this debate, both in terms of the state economy and decisions taken by entrepreneurs themselves related to part-time employment. In the light of the current problems with recruiting qualified employees, learning more about their concerns and factors that have an impact on their decisions may help employers be more effective in taking action.

Originality/value: The authors' contribution in this paper is to provide empirical insights into factors contributing to reluctance to work part-time. This paper corrects an identified lack of research into these factors in Poland.

Keywords: flexible forms of employment, part-time employment, flexibility, women in the labour market.

Category of the paper: research paper.

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1. Introduction

Flexibility is a quality of an organization that allows it to react to changes in the environment, mainly due to increased liquidity of the company's resources (Ansoff, 1965, p. 55). In human resources, flexibility may refer to forms of work organization and forms of employment (Krupski, 2005, pp. 80-81). The former include flexible working hours and telework, while the latter may apply both to civil law contracts and traditional contracts of employment. The civil law contracts comprise contracts of mandate, contracts for specific work, agency contracts and self-employment (Bąk, 2009, p. 11). As for traditional models of employment, it is believed that if any of their terms and conditions, i.e. the type of employment contract (for an unspecified period of time), working time (full-time), place of employment (employer's office/seat), work regulations (fixed hours) and duration of employment (long-term, uninterrupted) is disobeyed, the resulting form of employment will be considered flexible (Bąk, 2009, pp. 9-10). This shows that under a flexible contract one should understand not only an agreement concluded with an employee for a specific period of time but also that pertaining to part-time work, seasonal work or work carried out outside the employer's office.

This article focuses on the flexibility of the form of employment that disobeys the condition of working time in the traditional employment model as allowed under the Polish Labour Code. Part-time employment deviates from the standard working time, which typically means working the statutory or slightly shorter hours pursuant to the regulations accepted in the given workplace (Brzeziński, 2017, p. 197).

The subject of part-time employment is addressed here due to the fact that this form of work seems to be unpopular in Poland compared to countries in Western Europe, even though next to other forms of employment, both traditional contracts of employment and civil law contracts, it seems to be one of the factors necessary in a flexible organization (Skowron-Mielnik, and Wojtkowiak, 2016, p. 81).

Part-time employment is a characteristic feature of many European economies. The most recent Eurostat data (2019) show that in the European Union the percentage of employees aged 20-64 who worked part-time at the end of 2017 amounted to 18.7%. Among the EU member states, the highest percentage of part-time employees at the end of 2017 was observed in the Netherlands, where as many as 46.6% of employees aged 20-64 worked part-time. In turn, the EU member state with the lowest percentage of part-time employees in 2016 was Bulgaria (1.9% of the employed). In Poland, recent years have brought a gradual decline in the percentage of people employed part-time, although at the end of 2017 they accounted for 6.3% of the employed, which means a growth by 0.1 percentage point compared to the previous year. It is also worth noting that most of those employed part-time are women (cf. OECD, 2019).

The data quoted above clearly show that this form of employment is not popular in the Polish labour market – also among women. This may be due to employers' general reluctance to offer contracts of part-time employment as well as the lack of incentives that would encourage people to take up this form of work. In the light of the above, the main research problem was formulated as follows: What factors contribute to women's reluctance to work part-time and to what extent? In other words, what makes this form of employment unpopular in Poland? Pilot studies were carried out with the aim to propose an answer to these questions and propose further directions for research in this area.

2. Disadvantages of part-time employment revealed in studies – Methods and Results

The aim of the study was to determine the factors affecting the popularity of part-time work (disadvantages) and to verify to what extent they are statistically significant in the population of women of different characteristics, i.e. depending on their age, education, professional profile, current position and income, who have experienced this form of flexible employment. The study was conducted in 2018 on a sample of 71 female respondents with the use of a questionnaire which contained closed and semi-open questions offering the possibility to provide additional answers. Purposive sampling was applied, with the study addressed to women interested in further education (who voluntarily attend additional training courses, workshops, etc.), that is those focused on self-learning and investing in their own development. The results presented here refer to one part of the conducted studies. The structure of the studied sample is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. *The structure of the studied sample of women*

	Category	Representation in the study sample				
Age	< 26	31%				
	26-37	46%				
	38-49	20%				
	50-63	1%				
	> 63	1%				
Education	Vocational	6%				
	Secondary	16%				
	Bachelor's degree/ engineer	20%				
	Higher	61%				
	Economic	36%				
Professional profile	Humanistic and social	42%				
	Mathematical	4%				
	Technical	17%				
Current position	Regular employee	28%				
	Specialist	41%				
	Junior and middle-level manager	21%				
	Top-level manager	10%				

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	< 1,000 PLN	10%
Income per person	1,001-2,000 PLN	28%
in a household	2,001-3,000 PLN	28%
	> 3,000 PLN	34%

Source: own study based on empirical data.

The respondents were asked to evaluate the importance of factors that drive their concerns about working part-time. The following factors were identified: lack of satisfactory income, lack of bonds with other employees (risk of being omitted in important business matters), reduced perks/employee benefits, reduced pension scheme (shorter social insurance period), risk of the lack of clearly specified working hours, risk of spending more time on work than specified in the contract and a higher risk of being dismissed. None of the women taking part in the study reported other (additional) factors that could significantly contribute to the disadvantages of working part-time. The distribution of the responses is presented in Figure 1.

Disadvantages of working part-time

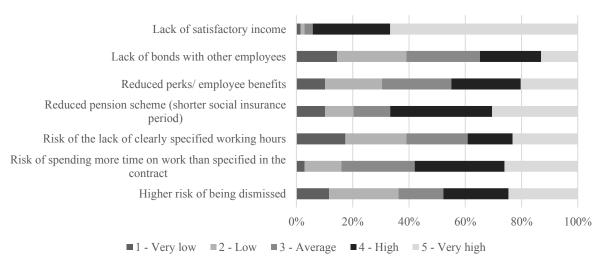


Figure 1. Evaluation of factors contributing to respondents' reluctance to work part-time. Source: own study based on empirical data.

The most important factor affecting the reluctance to opt for part-time employment among the surveyed women turned out to be the lack of satisfactory income, which is consistent with the findings of other authors (cf. Surdykowska, 2008). Another important issue was reduced pension scheme understood as a shorter period of social insurance which translates into a smaller pension (Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy, undated). The respondents' answers were subjected to a statistical analysis in order to verify whether the indicated levels of importance for the respective disadvantages of working part-time depended on age, education, professional profile, current position and income in a household, and above all – on the respondents' experience with this form of employment.

Statistical significance was studied with the use of the Statistica software. Firstly, each group of factors was verified using Pearson's chi-squared test (Pearson's Chi²). It is one of the basic and at the same time most common tests applied in checking statistical significance for qualitative variables. Secondly, the likelihood-ratio chi-square test (LR Chi²) was used. The basic condition for the both tests is that the representation in the tested sample must be at the level of at least 5%. The number of the respondents in the age groups 50-63 and over 63 years was small and even when summed up it accounted only for 2% of the studied sample. Therefore, these responses were excluded from further analysis.

Due to the volume of the study, only these characteristics are discussed which were confirmed in the two tests, with results for all characteristics presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Verification results of statistical significance between factors and respondents' characteristics

Age	Chi^2	df	p	Education	Chi^2	df	p	Professional profile	Chi^2	df	p
				Lack	of satisfactor	,					
Pearson's Chi^2	6,847744	df=8	p=,55315	Pearson's Chi^2	24,41267	df=12	p=,01786	Pearson's Chi^2	8,485662	df=12	p=,74612
LR Chi^2	6,882730	df=8	p=,54934	LR Chi^2	16,76674	df=12	p=,15858	LR Chi^2	9,526554	df=12	p=,65742
				th other employees	,	,	_				
Pearson's Chi^2	12,72302	df=8	p=,12174	Pearson's Chi^2	9,050483	df=12	p=,69861	Pearson's Chi^2	15,71170	df=12	p=,20480
LR Chi^2	12,35093	df=8	p=,13622	LR Chi^2	12,15804	df=12	p=,43307	LR Chi^2	17,60893	df=12	p=,12809
					d perks/emplo	•					
Pearson's Chi^2	11,77862	df=8	p=,16136	Pearson's Chi^2	19,14327	df=12	1 /	Pearson's Chi^2	11,30959	df=12	p=,50259
LR Chi^2	13,63665	df=8	p=,09174	LR Chi^2	21,94748		p=,03811	LR Chi^2	12,94387	df=12	p=,37313
				educed pension sch							
Pearson's Chi^2	19,51136		p=,01235	Pearson's Chi^2	17,30037	df=12	p=,13864	Pearson's Chi^2	11,26447	df=12	p=,50640
LR Chi^2	19,77093	df=8	p=,01124	LR Chi^2	20,10459	df=12	p=,06513	LR Chi^2	12,62711	df=12	p=,39672
				Risk of the lack			-				
Pearson's Chi^2	17,23812		p=,02772	Pearson's Chi^2	12,01641	df=12	p=,44436	Pearson's Chi^2	19,09110	df=12	p=,08635
LR Chi^2	18,31738	df=8	p=,01897	LR Chi^2	13,83397	df=12	1 /	LR Chi^2	19,59755	df=12	p=,07509
				of spending more t							
Pearson's Chi^2	7,276696	df=8	p=,50709	Pearson's Chi^2	9,813997	df=12	p=,63227	Pearson's Chi^2	5,932093	df=12	p=,91947
LR Chi^2	7,848535	df=8	p=,44840	LR Chi^2	10,82468	df=12	p=,54400	LR Chi^2	7,254591	df=12	p=,84034
					risk of being	,					
Pearson's Chi^2	18,34213		p=,01880	Pearson's Chi^2	14,41993	df=12	p=,27470	Pearson's Chi^2	15,32131	df=12	p=,22433
LR Chi^2	20,45267	df=8	p=,00875	LR Chi^2	18,80577	df=12	p=,09332	LR Chi^2	18,28445	df=12	p=,10732
				_							
Current				Income per							
position	Chi^2	df	p	person in a	Chi^2	df	p	Experience	Chi^2	df	p
•				household							
			2222		of satisfactor	•					
Pearson's Chi^2	6,245755	df=12	r ,	Pearson's Chi^2	15,14633	df=12	p=,23353	Pearson's Chi^2	2,969442	df=4	p=,56295
LR Chi^2	6,276097		p=,90153	LR Chi^2	11,77033	df=12	p=,46430	LR Chi^2	3,678501	df=4	p=,45126
D 1 01 140	0.227001			th other employees		•			2055002	10.4	00274
Pearson's Chi^2	9,237981	df=12	p=,68248	Pearson's Chi^2	10,69894	df=12	p=,55488	Pearson's Chi^2	,3855882	df=4	p=,98364
LR Chi^2	9,799395	df=12	p=,63355	LR Chi^2	10,92529	df=12	p=,53533	LR Chi^2	,3828262	df=4	p=,98386
D 1 C1:02	20. 42227	10.10	00241		d perks/emplo			D 1 C1:42	0004002	10.4	02462
Pearson's Chi^2	29,42327		p=,00341	Pearson's Chi^2	19,40814	df=12	1 /	Pearson's Chi^2	,8994893	df=4	p=,92463
LR Chi^2	34,35224	dt=12	p=,00059	LR Chi^2	22,00423		p=,03747	LR Chi^2	,8922396	df=4	p=,92567
D 1 01 142	22.04072	10.10		educed pension sch					1.040452	10.4	5/505
Pearson's Chi^2	23,94072		p=,02072	Pearson's Chi^2	17,45147	df=12		Pearson's Chi^2	1,840453	df=4	p=,76507
LR Chi^2	24,77027	dt=12	p=,01595	LR Chi^2	22,21257		p=,03521	LR Chi^2	1,825344	df=4	p=,76784
December 15 Chian	10.50441	16-12		Risk of the lack			-	D	2.054454	10.4	41220
Pearson's Chi^2	18,59441		p=,09880	Pearson's Chi^2	8,734151	df=12	p=,72545	Pearson's Chi^2	3,954454	df=4	p=,41220
LR Chi^2	23,41578	dt=12	p=,02440	LR Chi^2	9,212828	df=12		LR Chi^2	4,011407	df=4	p=,40446
D 1 C1:12	12.0007	10.10		of spending more to					7012072	10.4	0.4002
Pearson's Chi^2	12,80064	df=12	p=,38370	Pearson's Chi^2	13,60833	df=12	p=,32642	Pearson's Chi^2	,7813872	df=4	p=,94093
LR Chi^2	14,01537	df=12	p=,29973	LR Chi^2	13,83079	df=12	p=,31164	LR Chi^2	,7937527	df=4	p=,93928
					risk of being						

19,23622

24.14205

df=12 p=,08299

df=12 p=,01945

5,461380

5.595254

df=4 p=,24315

df=4 p=,23148

Pearson's Chi^2

LR Chi^2

df=12 **p=,02**019 Source: own study based on empirical data.

df=12 p=,08708

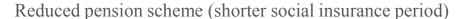
Pearson's Chi^2

19,06045

24,02424

Pearson's Chi^2

The second most important factor contributing to the respondents' reluctance to work parttime was reduced pension scheme (shorter social insurance period), which proved to be statistically significant with respect to age. When divided by this characteristic, reduced pension turned out to be an important and very important disadvantage for 86% of the women under 26. The older were the respondents, the less significant the amount of their future pension was to them (figure 2).



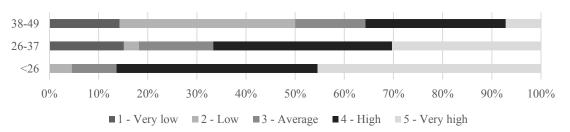


Figure 2. Significance of reduced pension scheme by respondents' age. Source: Own study based on empirical data.

Among the women included in the study, statistical significance was also verified between risk of the lack of clearly specified working hours and age. While this factor was not as important to the respondents as lack of satisfactory income or reduced pension scheme, it is worth pointing out that its significance fell noticeably along with age and gained experience (figure 3). The concerns related to this factor result from the fact that working part-time may mean working on specific days only, either five days a week or less than five days a week (with the maximum number of working hours per day regulated by the law), as well as in other forms. However, in practice it happens that the information about the work schedule (if not clearly specified in the contract) is given to the employee only a few days or even hours in advance, which has an impact on how important this factor may seem to employees.

Risk of the lack of clearly specified working hours

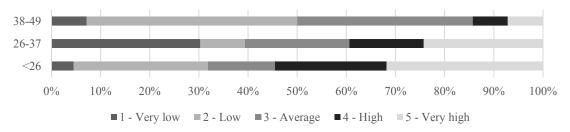


Figure 3. Significance of risk of the lack of clearly specified working hours by respondents' age. Source: Own study based on empirical data.

Similarly to the variable discussed above, higher risk of being dismissed was also evaluated as a very important and important factor affecting the decision to work part-time much more frequently among younger women, who are only beginning to gain experience in the labour market, compared to those over 26 years of age (figure 4). This may result from higher

unemployment rates among younger people who have not yet managed to acquire several years of work experience and who often decide to work informally due to no job vacancies in the official sector (cf. Pasternak-Malicka, 2015).

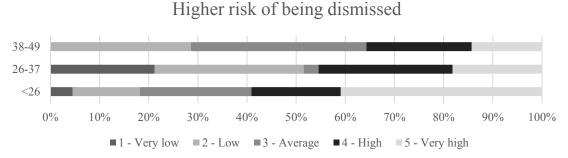


Figure 4. Significance of higher risk of being dismissed by respondents' age. Source: Own study based on empirical data.

Statistical significance was also found between reduced perks/employee benefits for part-time employees and the current position. This aspect was most strongly emphasized by regular employees whose share of perks/benefits in the total remuneration is most often lower compared to employees at higher positions (Hay Group, in: Błaszczak, 2015). For this group of employees they may be of greater importance. At senior positions this factor did not play such an important role; however, it is worth observing that 43% of top-level managers recognized reduced perks/employee benefits resulting from being employed part-time as important when evaluating the significance of disadvantages related to flexible forms of work. At the same time, it was of the highest importance for none of them (figure 5).

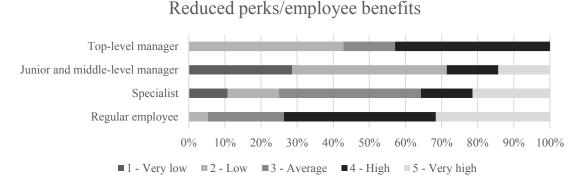


Figure 5. Significance of reduced perks/employee benefits by respondents' current position. Source: Own study based on empirical data.

Similarly, reduced pension scheme (shorter social insurance period) resulting from parttime employment was not recognized as very important among top-level managers who in fact evaluated it as very low. The importance of this factor grew as the level of the current position decreased (figure 6).

Top-level manager Junior and middle-level manager Specialist Regular employee 0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100% 1 - Very low 2 - Low 3 - Average 4 - High 5 - Very high

Reduced pension scheme (shorter social insurance period)

Figure 6. Significance of reduced pension scheme by respondents' current position. Source: own study based on empirical data.

It is necessary to point out that no statistically significant relationships were found with respect to the previous experience of working part-time and lack of it. Although 44% of the women included in the study have been previously or are currently employed part-time, the distribution of their responses was similar to other women participating in the study. This result indicates that the factors contributing to the respondents' reluctance to work part-time are not affected by them being employed part-time either currently or previously; however, further research would be recommended here on a wider group of women.

3. The situation of women in the Polish labour market and part-time employment

To provide a better context for the studies discussed here it may be useful to present a brief description of the Polish labour market. This knowledge might contribute to a better identification of reasons why part-time employment is generally unpopular among women and their specification in greater detail. The dominant features of the Polish labour market in the recent years include: falling unemployment rates which sometimes reach their historically low levels and a decreasing population of people at the working age caused not only by the negative population growth but also by migration. These trends are important for employers who often struggle to find the right employees for different positions. In the light of the current barriers in acquiring competent employees, including women, employers should for example consider people's growing ability to be flexible (Kawka, 2018, p. 118). Their flexibility is primarily manifested in their willingness to work flexible hours or remotely (cf. Hays Poland, 2017, p. 18). Another option in this respect which may also increase the organization's flexibility is to employ people part-time. This form of employment is popular mainly among women for whom it may constitute an interesting choice also because their situation in the labour market is more difficult than that of men, primarily due to their double role of professionally active mothers (carers). In addition, part-time employment may also be attractive to students, people

who learn new competences, run a household, provide care to dependants and those who are unable to work full-time due to health problems.

Despite the attractiveness of part-time employment, particularly for women who fulfil double functions, another reason against it – apart from the factors already discussed above – is the fear of negative impact that it might have on their career. Such concerns are reported even though compared to a full-time job reduced working hours translate into a smaller conflict between work and family life (cf. Grönlund, and Öun, 2018, p. 177).

It must also be taken into account that general unpopularity of part-time employment may be driven by factors that exist not only on the part of the employee but also of the employer. From the point of view of employers, offering part-time work to employees in general, not only women, carries with itself the same fixed costs as in the case of people working under a traditional model. For example, they include recruitment and training costs even though some studies indicate that part-time employees are at a risk of being overlooked when employees are selected for training courses, and that they have fewer learning and career opportunities (cf. Kauhanen, and Nätti, 2014). Furthermore, studies carried out in Belgian private sector enterprises revealed that part-time employees showed higher productivity at work compared to full-time employees (Gargero, Kampelmann, and Rycx, 2014, p. 948), which may be an unquestionable advantage of employing people part-time. In addition, this form of employment may make it easier for companies to adjust their working hours to the current demand for labour.

Continuing the discussion from the perspective of employers, it is important to emphasize that more women can be employed part-time because more women are nowadays professionally active. In Poland, the percentage of women in general employment rates increased considerably, particularly between the 1950s and early 21st century. After this period the employment rate among women rose by a few percentage points per year, reaching 48.7% at the end of 2016, compared to 30.8% in 1950 (Statistics Poland, 2017). This trend points to women's increased professional activity, which may be of importance for entrepreneurs interested in making their organizations more flexible, also by offering jobs to women under flexible models of work. At this point it is worth observing that a study carried out by Hays Poland (2017, pp. 18-19) shows that part-time work is offered, in addition to other flexible work solutions, in 40% of enterprises which employed the women participating in the study. Interestingly, the same group of women indicated that this form of flexible work was availed of by 5% of the respondents, even though flexible work was important or very important to 84% of them. Instead, flexible working hours and telework were chosen much more frequently.

The importance of offering women a possibility to work part-time is stressed by many authors. For example, Booth and van Ours (2013, p. 264), who conduct research on the Dutch labour market in which the percentage of part-time employees is one of the highest in Europe, say that if it were not for the jobs in which part-time employment is possible, women's participation in the labour market would drop considerably. They would be forced to choose between two extreme options, either a full time job or zero working hours, tending towards the

latter one. However, no research has been found that could confirm this thesis in the Polish labour market which in many ways is different from the Dutch one.

4. Summary

There is no doubt that part-time employment is not very popular among women in Poland although such option is offered by employers. The presented study shows that the experience of flexible forms of employment such as part-time work, either currently or in the past, does not have an impact on women's concerns connected with working part-time. However, the author's own study made it possible to verify several significant relationships:

- Importance of reduced pension scheme (shorter social insurance period) falls with age.
- Importance of risk of the lack of clearly specified working hours falls with age.
- Importance of higher risk of being dismissed falls with age.
- Importance of reduced perks/employee benefits falls with one's rise in the position in the organization's hierarchy.
- Importance of reduced pension scheme (shorter social insurance period) falls with one's rise in the position in the organization's hierarchy.

The most important factor contributing to women's reluctance to work part-time was unsatisfactory income. It was followed by reduced pension scheme (shorter social insurance period), which in fact also constitutes one's level of income but after retirement. As Surdykowska (2008, p. 293) points out, the basic premise for a universal development of part-time work is a relatively high level of income in society. This condition is not met in Poland as indicated also by the empirical study. Moreover, this form of flexible work, particularly in the countries of Western Europe, seems to be more present in the sector of services (Oczki, 2013, p. 92), which in Poland is relatively less developed.

Undoubtedly, the state authorities are also partially responsible for the unpopularity of parttime work among women. Currently, they offer no incentives such as for example lower levels of obligatory social insurance contributions or a tax relief. At the same time, it is flexible work solutions that improve the situation of women in the labour market.

Therefore, if these conditions are met, i.e. if the level of Polish society's wealth is higher and the sector of services becomes more advanced while the Polish state introduces the respective incentives, the popularity of part-time work among women may rise and the factors that currently contribute to women's reluctance to this form of employment may change. In addition, it is recommended to analyse the life situation of women in Poland who reach for this form of employment, and whether employers want to make their organizations more flexible by using this form of employment. Such research would help paint a fuller picture of why part-time work is not more popular in Poland.

To sum up, while the results and reflections presented here cannot be generalized for the whole population, they constitute an important contribution to this debate, both in terms of the state economy and decisions taken by entrepreneurs themselves. In the light of the current problems with recruiting qualified employees, learning more about their concerns and factors that have an impact on their decisions may help employers be more effective in taking action.

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