

## **GENDER EQUALITY & WORK: ARE WE THERE YET?**

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### **Abstract**

Gender is a social construct that outlines the roles, behaviors, activities and features that a particular society believes are appropriate for men and women. Gender equality is necessary in order to ensure a fair and productive labor market. Even though, Bosnia and Herzegovina has established legal framework including gender equality laws, women are still facing barriers to participation in the labor market. This research paper will indicate what are the main challenges behind the low participation of women in the labor market. It will provide information on gender differences; the main challenges, and also emphasize gender stereotypes which are contributing the gendered division in labor market.

**Keywords:** Gender; Inequality; Work; Bosnia and Herzegovina and Labor Market.

### **Introduction**

Gender is a social construct that outlines the roles, behaviors, activities and features that a particular society believes are appropriate for men and women. According to Anker (1997) "it is the fact that gender is used as criteria of social classification. Thus, is mainly determined by natural instincts of people to classify everything, where a great attention is paid to categorization as to gender features" (p. 2). The main theoretical perspectives are focused on labor market segregation, wage differences and aspect of gender equality in the labor market. The labor market segmentation theoretical approach is related to the existing explanations of present labor market processes by defining the existing problems of gender equality. The feminist approach has anthropological character and it concerns notion of social process, norms and concepts of society in gender equality.

This topic has been most researched by economic scholars and their main focus was on economical causes of the gender inequality in labor market. From social point of view the unfavorable position of women in labor market is nothing more than reflection of their social position, role and expectation. The basic statement of gender theory reflects the disadvantageous position of women in patriarchal society. The same position has been created thanks to unequal and subordinated position of women in a family and in the society in general. The reality perceptions of what is practiced in real social construct appears misleading compared to what is theoretically framed. Therefore, the labor market is a location where gender inequalities can be visible and sustained.

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In shaping power and status for both women and men, work plays a significant component. This generates gender inequalities in the division of everyday jobs. In case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, current economical changes are perfect base for discrimination in sphere of work and employment. According to World Bank Group, the extent to which B&H has installed institutions and programs to enforce laws and policies that promote equal access for men and women on CPIA gender equality rating scale in period of 2010-2014 is 4.0 (from scale 1.0 low to 6.0 high). The question is does this reflexes reality? Generally speaking, no country do women enjoy the same opportunities as men, irrespective of a country's income level. Although over the years some aspects of women's situation have improved, their opportunities in economic and political areas are still clearly limited.

### **The Conception of Gender Equality and Work**

Gender inequalities and the promotion of women's rights, interests and issues, are the common basis of the feminist studies. Butler (2010) claims that, "what is seen as general truth, as common knowledge, is instead naturalized through the workings of power." Butler's view of gender difference and importantly are not natural or authentic, but rather, "are constructs that are produced and maintained through the workings of power in societies." (p. 3). Then according to Begley (2000) "stereotypes present a trap into which many people can fall. Gender stereotypes are very influential; they affect conceptualizations of women and men and establish social categories for gender. These categories represent what people think, and even when beliefs vary from reality" (pp. 66-67). The beliefs can be very powerful forces in judgments of self and others.

Cross-cultural research on gender roles and gender stereotyping indicates that all cultures delegate different roles to men and women. Overall, there is no significant difference between the sexes when it comes to global unemployment rates but the female rate is consistently slightly higher than the male (Olgiati and Shapiro 2002, 6). When it comes to the transformation of men's and women's work roles it stands out among the many technological, economic, social and cultural changes. Despite this progress in the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, inequality remains after all across the three main dimensions—work outside the home, the kinds of jobs men and women do, and the relative pay they receive. We can say that, labor force participation is often seen as the prime indicator of changes in women's status.

As far back as Fredrich Engels' or Charlotte Perkins Gilman's writings on the subject in the late 1800s, social scientists and other observers have identified employment outside the home as the starting point for understanding women's position in society. Social theory often focuses on women's employment because it determines their access to resources and their ability to make independent decisions (Cotter, Hermsen and Vanneman, 2004, 4). Even if there is improvement of gender scores in recent years, B&H is still far behind in terms of gender equality in labor market. Previously, few studies have

been conducted to explore different types of labor discrimination. According to the major findings of conducted studies, women continue to face many barriers on their way to the top that are unique to their gender. They are often under-represented in organizations, nearly in all categories of jobs in B&H (Somun-Krupalija, 2011, 21). Competence and accomplishment of women is widely acknowledged, but despite this woman in the B&H situation is often exposed to some form of gender discrimination.

The legal and policy framework, in Article II of Gender Equality Law B&H states that: "It prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sex and sexual orientation. It also promotes equal participation of women in areas where they are considered less advantaged than men, namely education, economics, social security, health, sport, culture, public life, media as well as labor and employment." (Article II, GEL, B&H, 2010) Women's representation in the public sphere in B&H still remains low. Also, women who experience discrimination is more likely to quit or change their jobs rather report the case to the responsible institution. Position of women in the labor market has weakened: the employment rate of women is lower than the employment rate of men, and the gender gap is present in all indicators that frame the labor market.

Demanded employment is often not only sex and gender specified, but also associated with physical looks, which in practice usually means discrimination. According to Agency for Statistics B&H for the year 2013, women possibilities to access to the labor market are still low. Based on report, women are still lagging behind significantly from men. In year 2013, unemployment rate for men is 26.5%, and women rate is 29 %.

Another impact on the employment rate of women is parenthood, which is considered as one of the main reason for the withdrawal of women from the labor market. According to research, women in their 1920s and 1930s are asked in interview whether they are married or plan to have children, so they can see if women can spend time outside of office and travel. The issues of women's exclusion must be considered against the backdrop of stereotypes concerning the roles of man and women. This division of roles and responsibilities are mirrored in workplace relations (Somun-Krupalija, 2011, 14). Girls and women in their reproductive age are undesirable labor force in B&H. A child born more often means losing the job. All of this has placed women in position of choosing between motherhood and carrier.

Differences of the dominating motivation among men and women influence the choice of profession and position and involvement in the labor market. The most important conditions for women are good wage and safe work environment. These conditions are social aspects and possibilities to coordinate job with free time and family life. Men often express a viewpoint that sometimes they are made to work more in order to earn more and realize his role of bread winner superior. Women in this respect more often perceive

work as a possibility to realize her personal, social and mental needs” (WDR, 2012, 198). *In Framed by Gender: How Gender Inequality Persist in the Modern World*, Ridgeway has given a true contribution to field of gender inequality. She provides a theoretical framework to explain gender inequality on the workplace. The central premises is that, most fundamental to her argument is recognition that because we are all social actors, we view ourselves and others through gender lens. It permeates and shapes all of our interactions.

According to research provided by International Labor Organization women are paid especially little in “women’s jobs” such as those in cleaning and child care (ILO, 2003, 6). A research provided in B&H examined the socio-cultural determinants of the low representation of women in top managerial positions in public sector of B&H. Findings revealed that both male and female respondents perceived that societal culture has an important bearing on both thought processes and nature. The study concluded that if effective work-life policies are adopted, which support dual-earner couples, employers would get benefits in turn (Brankovic, 2013).

In 2013, ministers of all nine ministries of Bosnia and Herzegovina were men. Chairman of the Council of Ministers is a man. Gender representation of deputy ministers is equal - five women and five men, which is more women than in the previous term, when there were only two women deputy ministers (Agency for Statistics, 2013, 45). Managers reported organizational culture to be favorable to men. Male respondents believed more in hierarchical relationships, which support the notion that Bosnian society is hierarchical in nature, and affects interpersonal relationships of people. In Bosnian society, men are perceived to be assertive and commanding, where as women are expected to comply, obey and be submissive and inactive.

Having said that, what seems to be emerging is a view that there is a correlation between a number of women at the top of an organization and better organizational performance generally. There is, however, contention as to why this might be so. There is an ongoing dialogue about women’s leadership and management style and how it might differ from that of men. While many comment actors support there being a difference, there is a different view that this constitutes gender stereotyping which lacks validity. The fact is that there is evidence of an association which is sufficient to support having an increased representation of women in leadership roles (Conway, 2012, 4).

Gender equality in employment today is not only a question of social justice, but it represents an economic necessity. In fact, there are strong economic reasons for the increased presence of women in the workforce, and its working age population aging. Due to an aging population, we will not be able to count on the young generation as before, the woman is expected active role at all levels and in all sectors of the labor market. Thus,

the need for more active policy that would allow more women to participate in the labor market. It will contribute to such a policy, which will go convened the family, i.e., which will help establish a balance between the worlds of work and family commitments, and allow an easier return to work after absence from the labor market. Due to demographic changes it will be necessary to think about higher economic activity of women (Kerovec, 2003, 275-279).

### **Survey of relevant data on status of gender equality in B&H**

Particularly interesting is the analysis of the underlying gender stereotypes which shape the gendered division of employment in labor market. The subject of research is perception of gender equality in B&H based on categories of an unequal employment possibilities, unequal social status and unequal possibilities regarding working rights. All data collected for this research is secondary data. Data for this research is collected from World Bank data bases and Agency for Statistics of the Bosnia and Herzegovina. Time period of data analyzed is from referent period of 2007 - 2011 mainly collected from Labor Force Survey (LFS) from year 2009, 2012 by Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This date covered around 10,509 households and the age of people who were included in survey is 15 or more. All the data collected and analyzed is in accordance to European Statistics Office (EUROSTAT) standards.

Data used for this research is not normally distributed; therefore nonparametric tests will be used. These tests will be conducted in statistical software named Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Therefore, test that will be used is Wilcoxon Signed- ranks samples test or in SPSS test named Mann - Whitney for two independent variables. This research centers on the idea of judging the understanding reality of gender in the labor market. According to the literature, people's views of the gender issue are affected by different factors or situations. The preformed analysis examines whether the finding is relevant to the B&H, and if so, which are the factors that have major impact. It is easy to expect women to have less supportive approaches toward gender inequality than men. In this article, the Mann-Whitney test is conducted to see whether the result makes a difference in people's perceptions of gender equality. If it is significant, this means that these factors have a major impact either positive or negative on gender perception. Throughout the analysis we present only the p-value for the Mann-Whitney test.

### **Summary of the Results**

In Table 1 it is measured principle population characteristics, possible inequality or equality of activity rate, employment rate and unemployment rate by gender criteria on the labor market.

Table 1. Principle population characteristics by activity and gender in B&amp;H

Year		Activity rate	Employment rate	Unemployment rate
2007-2011	Male(AVG)	56.7	42.9	24.5
	Female(AVG)	32.1	22.7	29.0
	p-value	0.008	0.008	0.032

Source: Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina

From the results, we can conclude that, throughout all categories there is evident inequality of genders by activity rate, employment rate and unemployment rate. From this, a category of rate to which person belongs to, we can see that there are more males employed than females. In the Table 2 analysis is performed on persons in employment by groups of sections of economic activities attained by gender. There are three groups of sections of economic activities of persons who are employed (Agricultural, Industry, Services). All of these groups are classified by gender.

Table 2. Persons in employment by groups of sections of economic activities and gender in B&amp;H

Year		Agricultural	Industry	Services
2007-2011	Male(AVG)	18.7	39.3	41.9
	Female(AVG)	22.6	17.1	60.2
	p-value	0.008	0.008	0.008

Source: Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina

According to this analysis, there is gender inequality in all three groups. In terms of the overall labor market, industry and services are the main areas of employment. The service sector is still the leading sector of employment in the country. In the Table 3 analysis is performed on persons in employment by highest level of education attained by gender. There are three groups in the classification of education level of persons who are employed (primary school, secondary school, higher (higher level of education covers college, university, master, doctoral degree)). All of these categories are classified by gender.

Table 3. Persons in employment by highest level of education attained by gender in B&amp;H

Year		Primary	Secondary	Higher
2007-2011	Male(AVG)	21.9	62.9	15.0
	Female(AVG)	23.4	60.1	16.4
	p-value	0.548	0.222	0.690

Source: Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Throughout all groups there is evident equality of genders by employment related with level of education. From the category level of education to who person belongs to, there are more female employed than male in Primary and Higher level of education. Also, the largest proportion of working population in country has completed Secondary education. Since  $p$  value is more than 0.05 we can say that persons in employment by highest level of education attained by gender in B&H. In the Table 4 analysis is preformed on persons in unemployment by highest level of education attained by gender. There are three groups in the classification of education level of persons who are employed (primary school, secondary school, higher (higher level of education covers college, university, master, doctoral degree)). All of these categories are classified by gender.

Table 4. Unemployed persons by the highest level of education attained by gender in B&H

Year		Primary	Secondary	Higher
2007-2011	Male(AVG)	23.8	71.3	4.6
	Female(AVG)	23.4	68.6	7.9
	p-value	1.000	0.016	0.056

Source: Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina

In the group Primary and Higher level of education according to analysis preformed genders are equal by employment rate according to level of education. In the group Secondary, genders are not equal by employment rate according to level of education; more males are unemployed then females. The largest proportion of unemployed population in country is persons with Secondary education. Since  $p$  value is less than 0.05 we reject the  $H_0$  hypothesis for Secondary level of education. Since  $p$  value is more than 0.05 we retain the  $H_0$  hypothesis for Primary and Higher level of education.

## Conclusion

In B&H employment trends shows that women have been and continue to be employed less than men. Some of the barriers that women face in terms of employment are related to the unequal distribution of labor in the family, a lack of appropriate enforcement of legal regulations and the impact of the traditional norms and values in society. Even though it is prohibited discrimination based on gender in all areas including employment procedures, the real problem is in the lack of implementation of the law. We should not forget to mention that society has different expectations for men and women in fulfilling their social roles. Deviation from these roles is not encouraged, and traditional norms and values are clearly proscribed. Because of this, there is inability of women to enter the labor market. Based on analysis that we preformed, gender inequality persists. The findings outlined above showed that women are still somewhat less likely than men to be active in the labor force.

The journey for gender equality in labor market in B&H is still long way to go. In shaping the 21st century, women and men should be equal partners. The results showed that the research confirmed our assumptions, particularly the general hypothesis of gender discrimination and treatment of women compared to men. Also, women in the labor market are discriminated because of their gender, not because of lack of skills or abilities to particular job. Gender inequality, marked imbalanced distribution of power, resources and privileges at the expense of women, present not only in the private sphere and family relationships, but also in the so-called public patriarchy.

Unequal social treatment of women and men in the labor market in B&H is partially conditioned by biological differences such as, women's pregnancy that may differently reflect the status of women in society in general. In the struggle of to keep their jobs, common opinion, again to the expenses of women, implies the acceptance of the present irresponsibility of the society/state in ensuring the occurrence of sex or gender based discrimination in all spheres of social life. The fact presented in this paper suggests that a socially determined issue does a better job than efficiency detriment ones in explaining many existing patterns. The question is will women because of the presence of discrimination be forced to return to their "origins" (role of mother who takes care of the children)? It is clear, the path to full gender equality is not easy; thus, the future of gender equality will depend significantly on how we use these facts to guide the choice we make as societies.

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