

Kamila Rezmer

Nicolaus Copernicus University (Poland)

## A Female Political Scientist

**Book review: Agata Włodkowska-Bagan, Małgorzata Winiarczyk-Kossakowska, *Kobiety w polskiej politologii. Od diagnozy do współpracy*, Warsaw 2018, pp. 64**

The situation of women in various areas of life is seemingly satisfying. Each of us could name at least one example of business-woman, judge-woman, dean-woman, etc. However, equality between women and men in terms of payments, positions or promotion capabilities is illusionary. It is one of the most frequent matter in political programmes, which are elaborated in such a way that they should correspond with the actual and factual needs of citizens. This is why people vote for them. Abstract issues or artificial problems would not allow to get mandates in the long-run. New publications concerning gender equality are published. Among them there is *Równość płci w zatrudnieniu* by Helena Szewczyk, *Polityka równości płci w Unii Europejskiej* by Johann Kantol or *Gender w społeczeństwie polskim* prepared by many authors, and many others. This complicated and difficult matter was also undertaken by Agata Włodkowska-Bagan and Małgorzata Winiarczyk-Kossakowska in the report entitled *Kobiety w polskiej politologii* (*Women in Polish Political Science*). The report is a result of studies conducted from January 2017 to January 2018 aimed at exploring the situation of Polish female political scientists hired at the public universities in Poland.

The publication was opened by a methodological chapter in which the authors briefly described methods and techniques used for the purposes of the study. They used mainly in-depth interviews and questionnaires obtained through the implementation of CAWI. The authors gathered 45 transcripts of recordings and additional notes (p. 7). In terms of quantitative data, they obtained 158 filled questionnaires from which 135 were filled completely, while the remaining ones only partially (p. 7). The researchers pointed at the difficulties in the study resulting mainly from the validity of data, technical issues or very limited time of women taking part in the IDIs (p. 10). Another chapter dealt

with stereotypes in daily life. They construct such an image of women who are treated as persons designated to administrative and less assertive job positions. A part of respondents indicated that a part of men perceives them as destined to “fulfilling the role of silent, kind, smiled and pretty decoration” (p. 13). Another matter discussed in the chapter was the conflict of roles within which there were underlined jokes and commentaries uncovering discrimination, caring for relatives and difficulties in connecting professional and family duties (p. 15) as well as conflicts and competition between female co-workers also being the result of the conflict of roles (p. 16). The next chapter concerned the position of female political scientists, factors influencing decision-making process, and important positions in hierarchy. Respondents shared their observations that a big part of women refuses taking these positions because of the burden of organizational works (p. 21). In this chapter there were also presented statistical data referring to the place of women in the university structure (p. 25–31) and conclusions drawn from these data. Another chapter concerned the matter of scientific development comprising achieving new titles (p. 34), delegations (p. 34), scientific work (p. 35) or realization of research grants (p. 35). By the occasion of discussing development, the authors indicated its influencing factors among which there are individual work, receiving financial support and lack of family duties (p. 37). On the other side of the coin, there were presented obstacles, such as difficulty in connecting family and professional duties, financial situation, need for higher payment, and complicated relations with supervisors (p. 38). The respondents also proposed many solutions for the problem of connecting scientific development with family duties (p. 41). In the next chapter the authors dealt with very difficult, often shameful matters such as discrimination, mobbing, sexism, and sexual harassment. Directly after this chapter there was another one titled *W jedności siła* (*Strength in unity*) on the scientific cooperation. It is important to notice that within that chapter there were indicated factors that hinder the cooperation between women themselves, divided into objective and individual (personal) ones (p. 58). The last chapter is a kind of summary in which there were put conclusions and recommendations for the Polish female political scientists, universities, institutes as well as the Polish Ministry of Education and political science associations. In the chapter there is also a dictionary consisting of terms such as “glass ceiling”, “sticky floor”, “leaky pipeline”, etc., used in the report.

Despite diligent preparation, the reviewed report drowns in flaws. First of all, there was very big focus on the number of Polish female political scientists which does not have to necessarily mean the masculine domination of the discipline but also from the lesser interest into the field. Here I refer to the data according to which women are generally less interested in politics than men. Proposals of artificial regulations aimed equalizing the number of hired women, their participation in grants or publications also may lead to severe consequences such as a refusal of candidature or text of masculine political scientist with simply better achievements, greater knowledge and maybe even more hard-working. Secondly, during

reading the report it is hard to repel impressions that it is full of fallacies. On the one hand, there is a constant talk about the fact that women would want to have better job positions but it is hindered by countless factors. On the other hand, while there is a talk about women who already have these positions we encounter the following conclusion: “the respondents underlined that the preparation for fulfilling some duties or functions required learning and vast amounts of time which limited time for scientific work and hindered scientific career (p. 22). One may draw a conclusion that both having or not having some responsible job position are a serious problem for the authors. Thirdly, in the whole report women are presented as victims, inferior people perceived through the prism of their secondary qualities. This and other things indicate at the feminist character of the report which was intended to be a scientific elaboration of gender inequality. Fourthly, as stressed in the methodological chapter, in the report there were used all questionnaires, including those fulfilled partially (p. 7). Here one should consider why these lacks were omitted and were they occurring in the same places of the questionnaires. Fifthly, only political scientists were studied, while other disciplines were ignored. Investigating them could bring more but complementary results. For example, disciplines that are dominated by women could be studied and then compared with political science. It could turn out, for instance, that though many disciplines are dominated by men, there are those where they are minorities. The last flaw may be quite important especially if one wants to deal with equality, i.e. one cannot build it at the expense of others. That means, that we cannot allow a situation in which one would try to take over control or to create artificial solutions favoring women, because the eventual result would be the discrimination of men.

Despite the indicated flaws and weaknesses, the report is an interesting diagnosis of the human capital behind contemporary political science, especially of the situation of women. It touches immensely important matter of gender equality and problems that women deal with on daily basis. The report is an actual look at stereotypes that unfortunately still underlay social behavior. One cannot omit its motivating function that pushes women towards greater cooperation, and it is commonly known that collective efforts are more efficient than individual ones. The report concerns also the practices that were treated as taboo, i.e. discrimination, mobbing, sexual harassment. Fortunately, since #metoo there has been growing awareness of these problems, especially in women, who are their most frequent victims. The report also includes the most significant element influencing the situation of women in science and daily life, i.e. the importance of their roles. As long as social awareness does not change and activities for equal share of duties and calling for support are not undertaken, there will be no improvement of females' situation. Also, one should not diminish the meaning of scientific discoveries made by women as well as the other studies that they conduct. However, the most important thing is to not diminish women by themselves and to make an honest appreciation of their own work.

The report, despite being very narrowed, deals with the very important part of social reality. It is worth to be read by all scientists and decision-makers, because the situation of women is similar in all areas of life. The report stands as a great point for undertaking another studies on women's roles in society, gender equality issues and activities facilitating just development.

**Author**

**Kamila Rezmer**

Nicolaous Copernicus University in Toruń, Poland, e-mail: krezmer@doktorant.umk.pl