

“Professional activity of women in light of the Family 500+ Program”

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Monika Pasternak-Malicka (Poland)

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITY OF WOMEN IN LIGHT OF THE FAMILY 500+ PROGRAM

Abstract

The article aims to assess the impact of the Family 500+ Program on women's professional activity. The Family 500+ Program is a governmental support introduced in April 2016 and is designed to assist the families in raising children. The support is provided by monthly payment of PLN 500 for every single child in the family.

The study, primarily, attempts to assess the relationship between the level of expenditure on family benefits and the employment rate, and, on the other hand, based on the surveys, to indicate whether the Program encourages women to quit from the formal labor market. The article describes the professional activity of women, the level of social spending in Poland and some selected EU countries. Based on statistical data, an attempt was made to assess the impact of social expenditure on women's economic activity based on the linear regression method. Based on this method, it was stressed that the amount of benefit has the impact on the economic activity of women and this relationship is highly statistically significant. Fragments of own surveys from 2017 till 2019 were also presented, which suggest that the Family 500+ Program may lead to the withdrawal of women from the labor market. Respondents most often stressed the possibility of appearing reluctance to work for careers in large families. Entrepreneurs' responses showed the discouraging effect of the Family 500+ Program (35.1% in 2019), which may contribute to a decrease in labor supply according to 16.0% of respondents.

Keywords

personal finance, labor market, unemployment, female participation rate

JEL Classification

G28, H53, J21

INTRODUCTION

In 2016, the Family 500+ Program was implemented. It is a governmental support introduced in April 2016 and aimed at helping the families to raise children. The support is provided by monthly payment of PLN 500 every single child in a family. The article aims to assess the impact of the Family 500+ Program on women's professional activity. The study attempts to assess whether there is the relationship between the level of expenditure on family benefits and the employment rate and, on the other hand, based on the surveys, to indicate whether the Program encourages women to quit from the formal labor market.

In order to achieve the stated goal, descriptive and statistical methods were applied, among them the linear regression method. The direct questionnaire method was also used. The article adopts the research hypothesis that the Family 500+ Program affects the professional activity of women. Due to the length restrictions, an influence of other factors that may affect the labor market was skipped, and the attention was paid only to the relationship between family support and the employment rate.

The first part of the article describes the professional activity of women in Poland and European Union. The second one presents the es-

sence of the Family 500+ Program in comparison with the background of family benefits in the EU. Considering the statistical data, an attempt was made to assess the impact of family benefits on the economic activity of women based on the linear regression method. The fragments of author's own surveys from 2017 till 2019 were also presented.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

The transformation of the modern world, related to the globalization process, has, among other things, significantly increased the professional activity of women. When analyzing the literature on the subject, it can be concluded that the theoretical analysis of women's functioning in the labor market is an extremely difficult task. Most of the theoretical concepts in the field of sociology, psychology, or economics do not take into account the specificity of social roles that have been assigned to women for decades. A concept that refers to the role of the family and tries to explain the current state of affairs is the concept of Parsons (1972). According to Gerhard Leski, along with industrialization, new opportunities have opened up for women and should not be treated only as men dependent (Reszke, 1991). Currently, she considers the phenomenon of the permanent presence of women on the labor market to be a new, increasingly important structural feature of modern societies (Domański, 2004).

The level of professional activity of women depends on many economic and social factors, as well as cultural and religious premises. In most developing countries, women are potentially a disadvantaged group in the labor market. More often than men, they are exposed to extreme poverty, are less educated, have difficult access to modern technologies, and also face formal barriers to entering the labor market. The development of modern technologies can become a factor stimulating social and economic changes. At present, in spite of the improvement of the situation in the years 1990–2017 in the level of education and access to ICT, it is difficult to state unequivocally whether the impact of the implementation of information and communication technologies had a direct impact on the economic activity of women and the amount of their remuneration (Lechman, 2019). The currently implemented employment and anti-unemployment policy is implemented based on the principle of counteracting the gender discrim-

ination in the labor market and equalizing the opportunities (Doorne & Huiskes, 2003).

In most European countries, for more than two decades in the field of employment policy and the labor market, the emphasis has been on continuous improvement of women's professional activity, which will also depend on the situation in the labor market (Raišienė, Bagdonienė, & Bilan, 2014). Greater supply of employment will then translate into greater professional involvement of women. The number of jobs is affected, among others, by GDP growth. It has been shown that a 1% increase in GDP reduces the unemployment rate by 0.08% (Soylu, Çakmak, & Okur, 2018). At the same time, providing entrepreneurs with a higher degree of flexibility and responsiveness as well as attracting foreign investors to the country will create the premises for decreasing unemployment and creating new jobs in the region of Southeastern Europe (Qerimi & Sergi, 2017).

The professional activity of women in Poland is steadily increasing. This is due to market transformations (Greene, 2003), changes in life preferences, an increase in the level of women's education and transformation of the pension system, in which the accumulated capital determines the amount of the pension (Titkow, 2003; Dijkstra, 2003; Gilligan, 1982). The diversity in professional relationships is also emphasized. Women, more often than men, support the advice of family members, life partners, or friends (Lazányi & Bilan, 2017). Women are also more exposed to the need to accept flexible forms of employment (precariat). Research indicates that women more often than men take non-standard forms of employment (4.6% and 4.3%, respectively, in the working population of both genders) (Kopycińska & Kryńska, 2016). Women are also characterized by greater work flexibility (Abrhám & Bilan, 2015). At the same time, the level of professional activity of women is strongly determined by the settlement of the offspring, along with the increase in the number of children, the level of professional activity of women decreases (Duberley, 2013; Dahlstrand, 2013).

Research indicates that the negative impact of social benefits that can discourage work can be seen (Pařová & Vejačka, 2018). The impact of social benefits will depend on the socio-economic policy adopted in the country and social awareness. In Greece, where the “welfare state idea,” the implemented social payment system discourages employment. The opposite will be Germany, where conservative policy promotes professional activity (Cohen, 2017).

2. RESEARCH METHODS

In the paper the linear regression method (method of estimating the expected value of a variable) was applied. In the article the direct questionnaire method was also applied. This study is one of the most commonly used methods of obtaining empirical data. It consists in obtaining data by asking questions based on a specially prepared questionnaire. As part of own research conducted in 2017–2019 in the Podkarpackie Voivodeship, closed questions were used, with given answer options. The population of the Podkarpackie Voivodeship is 2 127 687 people, including 1 042 112 men and 1 085 575 women. The working age population exceeded 400,000 (410,897), of whom 275 316 were women (US 2018).

Own research was conducted on a targeted sample of 1,038 households and 289 business entities (in January 2017), 883 households and 225 companies (in January 2018), and 975 households and 268 companies (in January 2019). This is a continua-

tion of surveys initiated in May 2007 and repeated annually. Interviews in 2009–2019 were conducted in the Podkarpackie Province. The surveys were directed to people over 20 years with different levels of income and standard of living.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Professional activity of women

Women constitute half of the world’s population, but only 50% of them aged 15 and more are professionally active, while for men it is 77% (The World’s, 2015; Reduced, 2008). The level of activity of women in the individual EU countries is presented in Table 1. In the presented group of countries, Poland has the lowest economic activity rate of 48.0%, which means that less than half of Polish women work or declare willingness to work. In the analyzed countries, the highest ratio is recorded in Lithuania (75.5%), Denmark (73.7%), the Netherlands (72.8%), and Finland (72.4%).

The employment rate in Poland is one of the lowest in the EU and amounted to 45.5%. The value of the indicator was only lower in Greece (43.3%), while the highest percentage of women in employment aged 15 to 64 was also observed in Denmark (72.0%), the Netherlands (70.1%), and Germany (70.8%). The unemployment rate was low (5.7%). The smallest percentage of unemployed women was in Germany (3.3%), Great Britain, the Czech Republic, and Austria, while the highest in Greece (26.1%) and Spain (19.0%).

Table 1. Professional activity of women in the selected EU countries in 2017 (in %)

Source: Author’s research based on employment rate of people aged 20 to 64 in the EU in 2017, Eurostat, No. 68/2018, 20 April 2018, p. 4, ec.europa.eu/eurostat

Country	Women employment rate	Rate of women professional activity	Unemployment rate	Country	Women employment rate	Rate of women professional activity	Unemployment rate
Austria	67.7	71.4	5.0	Spain	54.3	59.6	19.0
Bulgaria	60.0	67.3	7.1	The Netherlands	70.1	72.8	5.3
Croatia	52.4	58.3	11.9	Latvia	68.8	75.5	5.7
Czech Republic	64.4	70.5	3.6	Luxembourg	60.4	67.5	5.6
Denmark	72.0	73.7	5.9	Germany	70.8	75.2	3.3
Estonia	68.6	75.1	5.3	Romania	53.3	60.2	4.0
Finland	67.6	72.4	8.4	Slovakia	58.3	64.7	8.4
France	60.9	66.7	9.3	Great Britain	68.8	73.1	4.2
Greece	43.3	48.0	26.1	Italy	48.1	52.5	12.4

Table 2. Professional activity of women in Poland in the years 1994–2017 based on LFS (in %)

Source: Author's research based on: the CSO reports: women and men in the labor market from 2000 till 2017, www.stat.gov.pl; Kobiety i mężczyźni na rynku pracy 2004, GUS, Warszawa 2004; www.stat.gov.pl; Sytuacja kobiet i mężczyzn na rynku pracy 2015, GUS, Warszawa 2016, www.stat.gov.pl; Sytuacja kobiet i mężczyzn na rynku pracy 2016, GUS, Warszawa, 6 czerwiec 2017, www.stat.gov.pl.; Kwartalna informacja o rynku pracy w czwartym kwartale 2017 roku, GUS, Warszawa, 23 luty 2018, www.stat.gov.pl; Informacja o rynku pracy w pierwszym kwartale 2019 roku, GUS, Warszawa, 25 maja 2019, www.stat.gov.pl

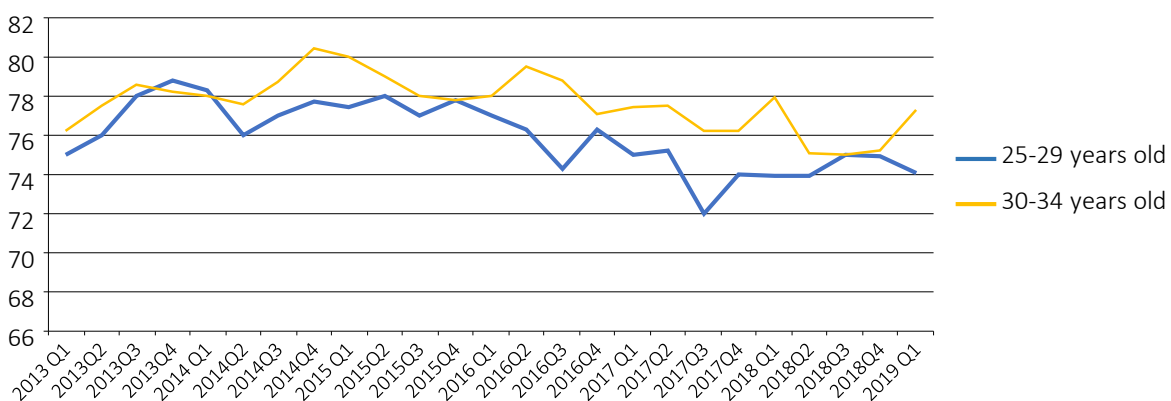
Years	Rate of women professional activity		Employment rate		Unemployment rate	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
1994	52.2	67.0	44.0	58.8	15.7	12.3
1995	51.1	66.5	43.7	58.5	14.4	12.1
1996	50.6	65.9	43.8	59.4	13.4	9.9
1997	50.0	65.5	44.0	59.8	12.0	8.7
1998	50.0	64.9	43.9	58.9	12.2	9.3
1999	49.7	64.3	40.7	55.9	18.1	13.0
2000	49.2	64.3	40.3	55.2	18.1	14.2
2001	48.8	63.4	39.0	52.5	20.0	17.3
2002	48.0	62.6	38.1	50.7	20.6	19.0
2003	47.9	62.4	38.2	50.9	20.3	18.4
2004	47.9	62.7	38.5	52.2	19.5	16.7
2005	48.1	62.9	39.2	53.2	18.3	15.4
2006	46.7	62.3	40.3	55.5	13.7	11.0
2007	46.7	62.2	42.3	57.4	9.4	7.8
2008	47.1	63.1	43.5	59.3	7.6	6.0
2009	47.5	63.5	43.3	58.3	8.8	8.2
2010	47.5	63.9	42.8	58.2	9.9	8.9
2011	48.0	64.2	42.8	58.5	10.8	8.8
2012	48.3	64.4	43.0	58.4	11.1	9.3
2013	48.5	64.4	43.4	58.5	10.5	9.1
2014	48.5	64.7	44.3	59.8	8.7	7.6
2015	48.6	65.0	45.2	60.6	7.1	6.8
2016	48.3	65.1	45.5	61.6	5.7	5.4
2017	48.0	65.1	45.8	62.2	4.6	4.4
2018	48.0	64.9	46.1	62.6	4.0	3.6
2019*	48.0	64.4	45.9	62.2	4.6	3.4

Note: * 1 quarter of 2019.

Table 2 presents the situation in the labor market in Poland in the years 1994–2019 by gender. Significant differences in the level of employment of women and men are visible over the selected years. The CSO statistics show that the recent economic activity of women has slightly increased to 48.0% in 2017–2019, nevertheless, the intensity of

men's professional activity is on average by a dozen or so percent higher in the period analyzed. The lowest level of the economic activity rate of women was in the years 2006–2007, when it was 46.7%. On the other hand, the female unemployment rate is falling – in 2018, it was 4.0% and almost equaled the level of male unemployment rate.

Source: CSO, LFS.

**Figure 1.** The professional activity rate of women aged 25–34 in Poland in 2013–2019

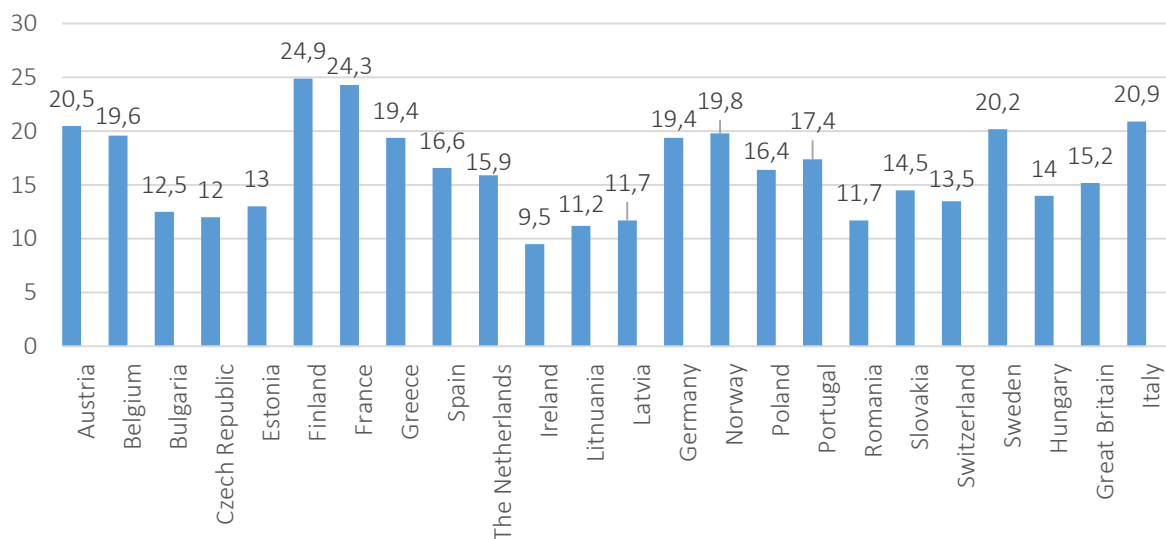


Figure 2. Social spending in the selected countries as a percentage of GDP in 2017

The economic activity rate is the share of professionally active people (employed and unemployed, i.e., looking for a job) in the total population of a given category (fig. 1). This indicator for women aged 25-29 reached the lowest values in the third quarter of 2017 (Q1 2019 was 74.1% and showed a downward trend compared to the last quarter of 2018) (Aktywność, 2019). Women aged 30-34 are characterized by greater professional activity, but here the seasonal fluctuations characteristic of the Polish labor market are also visible. After the introduction of Family 500+ Program benefits in April 2016, there is also a downward trend compared to the last quarter of 2018 (Q1 2019 – 77.3%).

3.2. Family benefits in Poland and the selected EU countries

Family benefits are an important instrument of family policy through which the state provides material support for families with dependent children. Family benefits are to fulfill, as the government intended, an important function in compensating large families for expenses related to raising children.

Each member state of the European Union provides in its legislation the help for the family if it finds itself in a crisis situation. Many European countries have introduced systemic solutions that encourage young citizens to have children. In 20 out of 28 countries, child benefit is granted regardless of income. In Cyprus, Bulgaria, Croatia,

the Czech Republic, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, and Italy, the income threshold applies. The most extensive family support systems and the highest bonuses for having children are in Denmark, Luxembourg, Germany, and France. The lowest are characterized by countries such as Greece, Lithuania, and Bulgaria (Ulgi, 2017).

Figure 2 illustrates the level of social spending as a percentage of GDP in the selected countries. Annually, the European Union countries generate several billion dollars in gross domestic product. In 2017, it was over 17 trillion. At the same time, in 2017, the EU countries spent almost 19% of GDP on social assistance, family benefits, or labor market support. The share of social benefits was the highest in Finland (24.9%) and France (24.3%). The next places were taken by Italy, Austria, and Sweden. In contrast, the lowest benefits in relation to GDP were paid in Ireland, Lithuania, and Latvia.

In Poland, family benefits are financed from the state budget, and the right to them depends on the financial situation of the household. Family benefits in Poland are family allowance and family allowance supplements, one-off childbirth assistance, care benefits (care allowance, care benefits, special care allowance), career allowance, and parental benefits. The most popular benefit is family benefit, which aims to partially cover expenses for the maintenance of the child. It is paid monthly for a benefit period from November 1 to October

Table 3. Expenditure on family benefits in Poland in 2004–2017

Source: Informacja o realizacji świadczeń rodzinnych w latach 2006–2017, Ministerstwo Rodziny, Pracy i Polityki Społecznej.

Years	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Family benefits (in PLN million)	7388	7834	7331	7367	7831	8178	8285	8121	7641	8064,9	9751,7	9884,5
Average amount of benefit	134	153	162	178	220	234,76	273,97	294,24	294, 87	320,88	368,31	no data

31. The amount of the benefit depends on the age of the child and is currently 95 to 135 PLN.

In Poland, PLN 9.9 billion was paid in 2017 for family benefits aimed at providing the financial support to families with children (Table 3). On average, 1,938.8 thous. persons benefited from these benefits monthly. beneficiaries. The average amount of expenditure on family benefits per one family benefit recipient systematically increased and in 2016 amounted to PLN 368.31 and was high-

er than in the previous year by 14.8%. According to Eurostat, the Polish government spent nearly EUR 10 billion on family support. It is about 2.5% of GDP, which makes Poland the seventh country among the countries that spend the most funds on social purposes.

On April 1, 2016, government support for families appeared. It is Family 500+ Program, hereinafter referred to as parental benefit, whose structure differs from family allowances. First of all, bene-

Table 4. Total support of the studied family* in individual EU countries (in EUR) in 2017

Source: Ulgi podatkowe i świadczenia rodzinne w UE – 2017, Raport PwC, listopad 2017, p. 28.

EU countries	Tax breaks	Family benefits	Total state support (in euros)	Total state support in relation to average remuneration (in %)
France	5228	1558	6786	13.7
Hungary	1187	1052	2239	9.8
Austria	420	4538	4958	9.5
Poland	521	1405	1926	7.9
Croatia	1950	0	1950	7.4
Luxembourg	938	6600	7538	6.5
Latvia	966	410	1376	6.5
The Netherlands	2778	1777	4555	6.2
Estonia	370	1200	1570	5.7
Slovenia	1228	822	2050	5.3
Belgium	1031	3213	4244	5.2
Germany	1956	2304	4260	5.0
Slovakia	514	564	1078	5.0
The Czech Republic	1253	0	1253	4.9
Sweden	0	2832	2832	4.7
Ireland	0	3360	3360	4.5
Portugal	1200	0	1200	4.3
Latvia	720	0	720	3.7
Great Britain	0	2080	2080	3.0
Finland	100	2397	2497	2.9
Denmark	0	3416	3416	2.9
Romania	0	444	444	2.7
Malta	0	900	900	2.6
Italy	1430	0	1430	2.4
Spain	970	0	970	2.1
Greece	0	320	320	2.0
Cyprus	0	760	760	1.7
Bulgaria	21	0	21	0.2

Note: * Applies to a family consisting of professionally active parents, earning the national average, and two healthy children aged 4 and 8.

fits are targeted only at poor families, and in the case of Family 500+ Program, the income criterion is applied only if you have one child. In addition, benefits vary depending on the age of the offspring, unlike the Family 500+ Program. Family benefits are entitled to supplements in certain situations, and can also be granted to children over 18 years of age, which was not included in Family 500+ Program.

Until July 2019, parents received parental benefit in the amount of PLN 500 irrespective of their income for the second and subsequent children up to the age of 18. In the case of households with an income below PLN 800 per person (or PLN 1200 net in the situation of raising a disabled child), support could also be granted to the first or only child. From July 1, 2019, the income criterion was also abolished for the first child.

The main goal of the Family 500+ Program is to be financial aid targeted at families raising children and economic support for families, in particular those at risk of poverty (Sejm, 2016). By the end of February 2019, over 3.62 million children under 18 (52% of all children) had already been covered by assistance under the government's Family 500+ Program. Over 2.38 million families participate in the program (Raport Rodzina 500+, 2019). The described element of the support system for families and fertility has great social support – the vast majority of people participating in the CPOR study (80%) supported the introduction of parental benefit (Program, 2016). After one year of the

program, 77% of respondents still supported the program (Postrzeganie, 2018).

As a result of the introduction of the Family 500+ Program, Poland was at the forefront of countries with the largest financial support for families compared to the average salary in the country. The average amount of assistance from the European Union countries in terms of family allowances and benefits is currently about PLN 10,178 a year (EUR 2,383), in Poland it is 8,252 (EUR 1,926). The simulation concerned a model, average family, consisting of professionally active parents, earning the national average, and two healthy children aged 4 and 8 years. Table 4 presents the total support of a family of four in individual EU countries in 2017.

3.3. The impact of social spending on women's professional activity

The publication uses the linear regression method (method of estimating the expected value of a variable) to investigate whether there is a statistical relationship between pro-family expenditure and professional activity of women. Figure 3 presents a scatter chart, which is a graphical interpretation of the correlation between the female participation rate and social expenditure in the selected countries. The graph illustrates the negative relationship, which means that the increase in social spending will be accompanied by a decline in employment. The analysis shows that in this case, there is no statistical relationship between the two variables, which may result from a different meth-

Source: Author's research based on Figure 1 and Table 1.

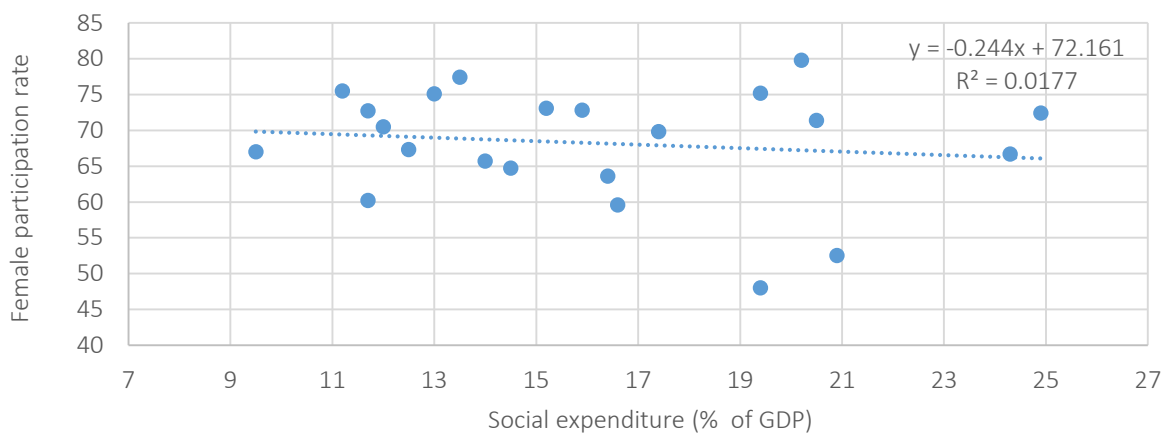


Figure 3. Scatter chart between social expenditure and the female participation rate in 2017 in the selected EU countries

Source: Author's research based on Figure 1 and Table 1.

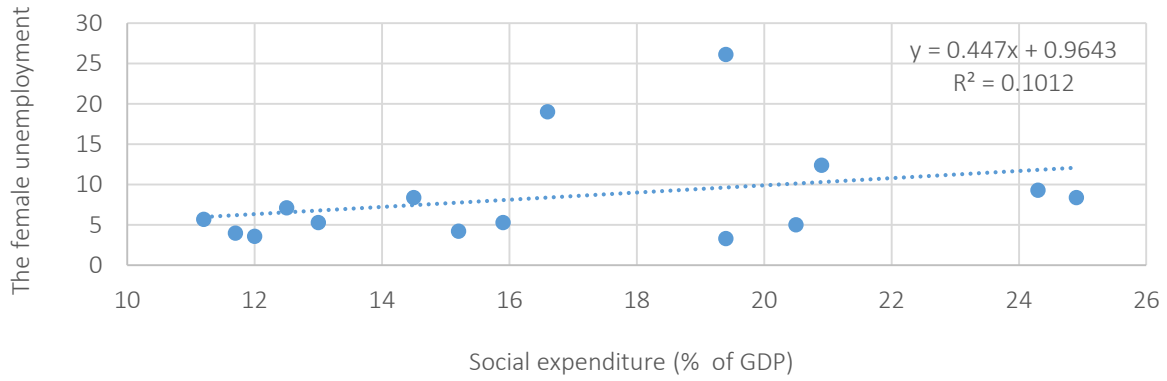


Figure 4. Scatter chart between social expenditure and the female unemployment rate in 2017 in selected EU countries

Source: Author's research based on Table 1 and Table 3.

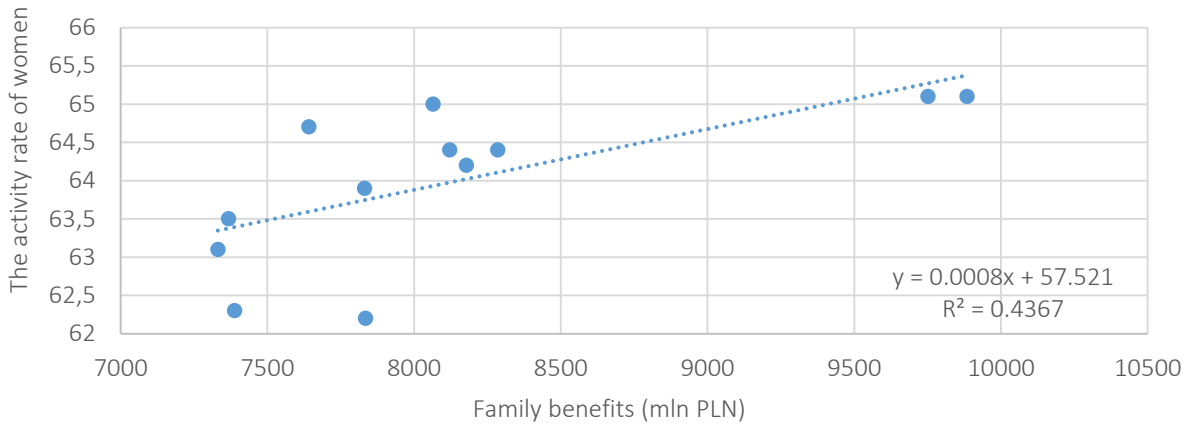


Figure 5. Scatter chart between family benefits and the activity rate of women in Poland in 2006–2017

Source: Author's research based on Table 1 and Table 3.

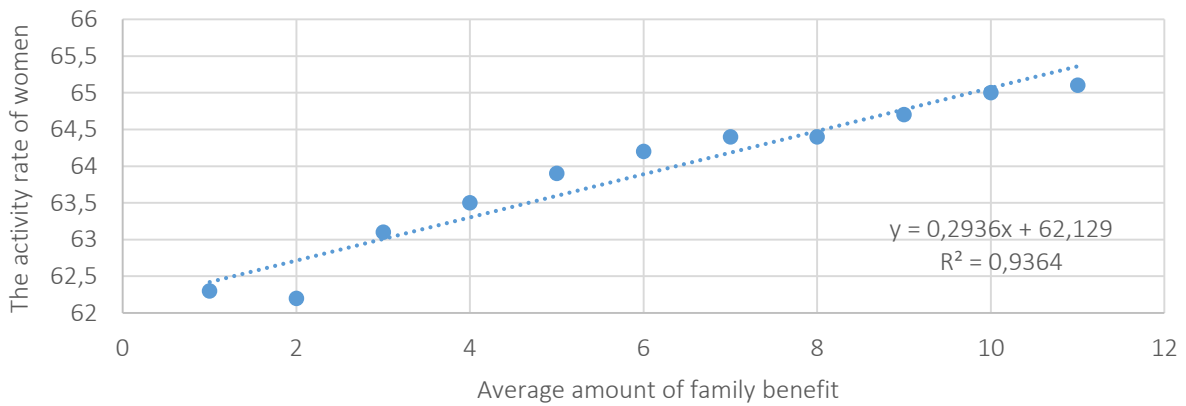


Figure 6. Scatter chart between the average amount of family benefit and the activity rate of women in Poland in 2006–2016

odology for calculating the coefficients in individual countries and many other factors affecting the specificity of the country's labor market.

Figure 4 shows the relationship between the level of social spending and the female unemployment rate. Using the linear regression method, the trend line was determined, whose pattern is located in the upper right corner of the chart. Under it is the R^2 factor, i.e., the indicator of determination. Its value was 0.1012, which means that the relationship between the two variables is not significant. The chart also showed positive correlation, which may prove that the increase in social spending will increase the unemployment rate among women.

Figures 5 and 6 refer to the relationship between family benefits and professional activity of women in Poland in 2006–2017. In the second case, the determination index reached 0.9364, which indicates a strong relationship between the two variables.

3.4. Family 500+ Program in empirical research

As part of own research from 2017 till 2019, households and entrepreneurs were asked about the effects of the Family 500+ Program. Table 5 presents the structure of households' answers to the question about the effects of the Family 500+ Program. Respondents most often pointed to the possibility of appearing reluctance to work for carers in large families – nearly every third respondent in 2019. Attention was also paid to the positive aspects of the program, i.e., improving the economic conditions of children (23.3% in 2019) and boosting consumer spending (12.8% in 2019). Nearly every twentieth person was of the opinion that the indicated family benefits may lead to the withdrawal of women from the labor market.

Table 6 presents the structure of entrepreneurs' responses. In this case, the discouraging effect of the Family 500+ Program (35.1% in 2019) was

Table 5. Structure of answers to the question about the effects of the Family 500+ Program

Source: Author's calculations based on the data from household surveys.

Opinion	No. of people			Percentage structure		
	2017	2018	2019	2017	2018	2019
Discourages large families from gainful employment	300	252	311	28.9	28.5	31.9
Growth of people willing to work informally	107	111	115	10.3	12.6	11.8
Dynamizes consumer spending – beneficial for the economy	154	113	125	14.8	12.8	12.8
Increases the number of pathological families, e.g., with alcohol problems	182	132	134	17.5	14.9	13.7
It improves the living conditions of children	229	219	227	22.1	24.8	23.3
Women withdrawal from the labor market	50	43	47	4.8	4.9	4.8
others	9	8	9	0.9	0.9	0.9
Total	1038	883	975	100	100.0	100.0
No answer	7	5	6	0.7	0.6	0.6

Table 6. The structure of employers' answers to the question about the effects of the Family 500+ Program

Source: Author's calculations based on the data from surveys conducted by business entities.

Opinion	No. of people			Percentage structure		
	2017	2018	2019	2017	2018	2019
Discourages large families from gainful employment	89	80	94	30.8	35.6	35.1
Lack of people willing to work	49	32	43	17.0	14.2	16.0
Dynamizes consumer spending – beneficial for the economy	50	28	23	17.3	12.4	8.6
Increases the number of pathological families, e.g., with alcohol problems	40	38	40	13.8	16.9	14.9
It improves the living conditions of children	40	38	43	13.8	16.9	16.0
Women withdrawal from the labor market	13	6	23	4.5	2.7	8.6
others	1	0	2	0.3	0	0.7
Total	289	225	268	100	100.0	100.0
No answer	7	3	0	2.4	1.3	0

even more strongly emphasized, which may contribute to a decrease in labor supply according to 16.0% of respondents. Entrepreneurs as employers in 2019 emphasized the problem of withdrawal in the women's market much more (8.6%).

The decrease in women's economic activity after the introduction of the Family 500+ Program is the subject of several scientific studies. It was also the subject of a CPOR survey in March 2017. At that time, 12% of respondents personally encountered the case of resignation from the work of the mother in the family receiving parental benefit (Postrzeganie, 2018). Similar results were obtained by the analysis of Myck (2016) who based on the theoretical model estimated that the reduction of parents' professional activity may concern about 235,000 persons, the calculations covering a period of many years after the introduction of the benefit. The author estimated that mainly women with lower or secondary education will leave the job (Myck, 2016). Szarfenberg (2016) emphasizes that the Program will discourage professional activity of both parents in families with many children and those with one or two children. The indication of these groups as the most susceptible to occupational deactivation is consistent with the report by Bargu and Morgandi (2018) who showed that the Program strongly discourages adults in

families from a lower quintal of income distribution from undertaking work.

According to the research by Magda, Kiełczewska, and Brandt (2018) between the third quarter of 2016 and the second quarter of 2017, 91-103 thous. women resigned from employment or seeking work as a result of the Family 500+ Program benefit (Magda et al., 2018). If this program were not implemented, the economic activity of women with children would be higher by approximately 2.4 percentage points. The effect intensified in the first half of 2017, when the activity of women receiving benefits was lower by 3 percentage points (Magda et al., 2019). Radzik (2018) emphasizes that this Program determines the decision to leave the Poles living, especially, in the poorer regions of the country, e.g., in the Podlasie, Podkarpackie, or Warmian-Masurian provinces.

Test results are not always clear-cut. As part of the LFS economic activity survey, the Poles were asked about the impact of Family 500+ Program on their professional lives. 76 thousand people admitted that thanks to this benefit they started working, and another 75,000 began to look for it. In turn, 33 thousand using additional money resigned from employment, and 34,000 stopped looking for it.

CONCLUSION

The Family 500+ Program came into force in April 2016. Its purpose was to improve the demographic indicators and reduce the child poverty. It seems that, apart from the positive effects of the benefit, it also has adverse consequences in the labor market. One of them is the negative impact on the economic activity of women. As a result of an increase in non-labor income, the financial attractiveness and need for employment decreases (so-called income effect). This effect is particularly strong among low-income families.

The hypothesis set out at the outset that the parental benefit affects the economic activity of women seems to be confirmed by the cited test results and published analyses. The professional activity of young women in Poland aged 25-29 and 30-34 shows a downward trend compared to the period before the Program was introduced. Surveys indicate that one of the effects of a Family 500+ Program benefit may be the withdrawal of women from the labor market.

However, the interpretation is not so obvious. The latest Labor Force Survey research shows that the professional activity of some beneficiaries of the Program has had the positive impact (76,000 started work and 75,000 are looking for it). Similarly, based on the linear regression method, it was pointed out that the amount of benefit affects the economic activity of women and this relationship is highly statistically significant. This may be due to the fact that after receiving the parenting benefit, more parents

could provide childcare, because in Poland, there is still no nursery offer or cheap childcare at home for children up to 3 years old (private nursery costs about 1-1.5 thousand PLN monthly, and the number of places in state institutions is insufficient).

The Family 500+ Program, as in force until July 2019, could have had the negative impact on the professional activity of mothers. Instead of supporting the women in decisions to remain in the labor market, the faulty construction of the Program could have prompted some of them to become inactive. This impact could have been reinforced by the low availability of part-time work. It seems that while leaving the labor market in the short term may be neutral or even beneficial for the household, a long break in work may hinder the return to employment in the future and increase the risk of poverty in the old age.

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