

Vertical Gender Segregation in the Polish Labour Market Through the Lens of Social Stereotypes and Structural Constraints*

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* Presented at the 45th IBIMA International Conference, 25-26 June 2025, Cordoba, Spain

Abstract

The study examines the extent and causes of vertical gender segregation in the Polish labor market, particularly in business, science, and public administration. The relevance of the work is due to persistent barriers that limit the advancement of women to management positions despite their high level of education and professional training. There is still a lack of interdisciplinary studies in the scientific literature that comprehensively analyze this problem, combining quantitative data with structural and cultural factors. To fill this gap, the study applied an interdisciplinary approach based on structural feminism, social construction theories, the EU institutional framework analysis, and official statistics (Eurostat, EIGE, UN Women).

The research methodology involves analyzing gender balance indicators at different levels of government, comparing national and European trends, and assessing the effectiveness of policies promoting gender equality. The main results indicate a significant gap between the share of women in total employment and their representation in senior management. Vertical segregation is caused by a combination of institutional barriers, gender stereotypes, imbalances in the distribution of family responsibilities, and insufficient support from state mechanisms.

The paper substantiates the need to strengthen legal obligations, implement transparent promotion and quota procedures, and create a favorable cultural climate for women's career growth. The study can serve as a basis for developing strategic recommendations in the fields of human resources policy and gender equality in Poland and other Central and Eastern European countries.

Keywords: gender segregation; vertical inequality; glass ceiling; female leadership; Poland