
Women Working in Nonstandard Forms of Employment: Meeting Employee Interests

Submitted 13/07/21, 1st revision 01/08/21, 2nd revision 21/08/21, accepted 30/09/21

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Abstract:

Purpose: The main aim of this article was to present characteristics of the employment of women working in nonstandard forms of employment in Poland considering employee interests.

Design/Methodology/Approach: Based on the narrative literature review, hypotheses and research questions were formulated and the meaning of key categories was clarified. Data for the analysis were derived from quantitative research conducted using the CAWI technique. The survey was conducted on a representative sample of 1,000 working Poles. The analysis of the results was performed using the methods of descriptive statistics and statistical tests to check the correlations between variables.

Findings: The research results did not confirm the beneficial effect of nonstandard forms of employment on the labor activation of women. Women do not work in these forms more often than men, but they are more frequently employed involuntarily. The possibility to choose the form of employment is linked to a better meeting of the interests of working women. In the standard forms, women's interests that are satisfied include employment stability, protection and access to social benefits, health services at the employer's expense, good occupational safety and health, training at the employer's expense and assistance during redundancy. In nonstandard forms, these mainly include a good atmosphere and the possibility to influence working time organization.

Practical Implications: The results of the research can be used in making the decisions of political character, concerning the applicability and share of particular forms of employment in the labor market. From the perspective of usefulness to employers, important results were obtained concerning the possibilities of choosing the form of employment and meeting specific interests of women.

Originality/value: Previous research results have been relatively often based on secondary data from labor markets. A survey questionnaire was used in this project. Original and representative research results were obtained on women's work in nonstandard forms of employment in Poland, taking into account the criteria of voluntariness, type of forms and meeting of employees' interests.

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Keywords: *Nonstandard forms of employment, women, employee interests, Poland.*

JEL classification: *J28, J41, J80, M54.*

Paper Type: *Research paper.*

Acknowledgement: *The project was financed by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education in Poland under the program “Regional Initiative of Excellence” 2019–2022, project number 015/RID/2018/19, total funding amount PLN 10 721 040,00.*

1. Introduction

Nonstandard forms of employment have been the subject of scientific explorations and research for many years. Their presence in European labor markets has also become established, whereas the economic slowdown associated with the COVID-19 pandemic may further induce employers to use nonstandard forms of employment to provide greater flexibility (Bał-Grabowska and Piwowar-Sulej, 2020). Furthermore, the issue of benefits of nonstandard forms of employment for employees is not presented unequivocally. One of the barriers here is the differences in the definition of nonstandard forms of employment and the diversity of these forms across individual countries.

An important factor considered during the analysis of the benefits of nonstandard forms of employment is the gender of employees. The gender gap indicates that women work in nonstandard forms of employment more often than men. In addition, these forms are considered to have the characteristics of precarious employment, indicating a low degree of meeting employee interests (Jacquemond and Breau, 2015). Furthermore, the benefits of the use of nonstandard forms of employment for women are highlighted by the possibility of more flexibility combining work with family life, creating the conditions for the labor activation of women, and, in some nonstandard forms of employment, such as self-employment, the possibility of meeting employees’ business ambitions and earning higher incomes (Tonkikh *et al.*, 2019; Buribayev and Khamzina 2019; Farné and Vergara 2015).

Patterns of the behavior of men and women in the labor market are not just a reflection of the economic situation, the cultural context and individual beliefs, but are also a reflection of the existing institutional arrangements (Dobrotić, 2015). This justifies conducting research in a national context. Poland is among the European Union countries (next to Spain and Portugal) with the highest percentage of nonstandard forms used in employment (Eurostat, 2021). The range of these forms is also very wide, including contracts based on civil law (e.g., contracts of mandate and contracts for specific work), employment through temporary work agencies, self-employment, and unregistered employment. These conditions make Poland an appropriate subject to conduct research on the use of nonstandard forms of employment.

The aim of this article is to show characteristics of the employment of women who are working in nonstandard forms in Poland and to provide answers to the questions of whether women work in nonstandard forms of employment more often than men and whether they work in these forms more often involuntarily. To characterize employment in nonstandard forms, reference was made to the category of employee interests. Nineteen employee interests were selected, and the degree of realization of these interests was evaluated by the respondents. The survey was conducted on a representative sample of 1,000 respondents (working Poles), including 441 women. Empirical data were used to test hypotheses, with their content determined using a narrative literature review.

2. Literature Background

2.1 A Narrative Literature Review: Assumptions

A narrative literature review was used in this study. This method was chosen to show the current state of the knowledge on the use of different forms of employment considering the gender criterion. The choice of this method was dictated mainly by the complexity of the phenomenon studied and the methodological diversity in the approach to its explorations. A narrative literature review seeks to combine different studies to reinterpret and to establish mutual relationships allowing for the definition of the context of the research problem (Baumeister and Leary, 1997). It should be emphasized that this method contains a subjective element that gives the researcher greater latitude in the identification of studies to be reviewed and discussing the results. The researcher decides which studies should be included and which should be excluded from further analysis. The selection procedure and the choices made, however, must be established and explained (Green *et al.*, 2006). This means identifying the subject of the study, the database, and the time frame adopted in the literature review.

In the present study, forms of employment with respect to the gender criterion were adopted as the subject of the study. The publications used in the analysis were searched in the ISI Web of Science database. In the main stage, the literature review was limited to scientific publications published between 2010 and 2020. To identify potentially relevant research articles, the database was searched using the following keywords: forms of employment, employment forms, gender, and women. This was followed by content analysis and verification of the usefulness of the results obtained. The next step was to extend the scope of the analyzed publications with scientific papers published before 2010. Publications of significant importance to which the authors of the publications published after 2010 made reference to analyze the research problems and the components of the research hypotheses were selected.

At its core, a narrative literature review, referring to both empirical and theoretical studies, is a technique for building the theory and generating hypotheses (van

Knippenberg, 2012). In this paper, the review was primarily used to formulate research hypotheses.

2.2 Working in Nonstandard Forms of Employment According to Gender: Results of a Literature Review

The vast majority of the analyses on the use of nonstandard forms of employment have indicated the importance of the gender criterion. Women work in nonstandard forms of employment more often than men with these forms taking on a precarious nature more often than for men (Benach *et al.*, 2016; Acker, 1999; Tapia *et al.*, 2017; Williamson and Baird, 2014; Bondy, 2018; Klimenko *et al.*, 2017). This phenomenon is part of the gender gap problem. It is considered that the gender gap favors men if we consider the rate of participation in the labor market, wage discrepancies or the presence in senior positions in company boards; conversely, the gender gap favors women when we address atypical forms of employment (part-time work or fixed-term contracts) and precarious jobs (Niță, 2019; Bieszk-Stolorz, 2020). The association of precarious employment with gender is also confirmed by a study of the spatial dimensions of precarious employment (Jacquemonod and Breaux, 2015).

The overrepresentation of women in nonstandard forms of employment is accentuated when some additional factors are present, such as being a migrant. Research in Canada showed a higher concentration of precarious forms among migrants (Ali and Newbold, 2020). Furthermore, research in Australia found that in a disadvantaged group in the labor market (migrants), women are more likely to be burdened/doomed to insecure forms of employment, and they also more often give up work to care for their families (Ressia *et al.*, 2017). Among those employed in agriculture, women also work significantly more often in precarious forms of employment, including unregistered employment (Gormus, 2019).

Research conducted during the economic crisis produced interesting conclusions. Research in Cuba showed that during the crisis, highly skilled women accepted jobs in nonstandard forms with relatively frequent work that was not in line with their qualifications, including paid work performed at home in unregistered employment (Jerónimo Kersh, 2018). In the United States and Canada, however, the nonstandard employment of women increasingly manifests itself, although not on a mass scale, in the shift to craft and artistic work performed at home, which is sometimes associated with blogging (craft blogging, especially domestic arts and crafts) (Black *et al.*, 2019). There is also a noticeable trend towards increasing the ratio of women in self-employment (Nina-Pazarzi and Giannacourou, 2005). International studies have found that nowadays women are also more often self-employed than men (Bögenhold, 2019).

Therefore, it can be concluded that women work more often than men in nonstandard forms and that research on the relationship between work in these forms and meeting employee interests considering the gender criterion should be conducted.

One of the basic issues of women's working in nonstandard forms of employment is whether making the labor market more flexible by introducing such forms is beneficial for women. The literature analysis indicates that the answer to this question depends on the context, including national determinants. In some countries, the labor activation of women is still at such a low level that the use of nonstandard forms of employment is seen primarily as an opportunity for women to attain gainful employment.

In Tunisia, which, compared to other Arab countries, is characterized by a relatively high level of respect for women's rights, the majority of women are still outside the labor market, unemployed, or work in precarious forms of employment. The need for gender-based policies with respect to women's economic participation and rights is strongly emphasized (Moghadam, 2019). Kazakhstan is described as a country at the beginning of the development of a legislative and organizational framework for gender equality in the workplace. Attention is also drawn to the paradox that currently, the social expectations in Kazakhstan that women would work are basically the same as those for men. At the same time, however, a stereotype of male privilege persists in family and domestic relationships. In this context, expanding the use of nonstandard forms of employment is seen by the authors of the analysis as potentially beneficial for the situation of women in the labor market (Buribayev and Khamzina, 2019).

Similar conclusions were drawn from the research conducted in Russia on women's employment in remote forms of employment. It was concluded that remote working can be seen as a factor in improving women's quality of life in sociocultural, familial, parental and reproductive terms. An assessment of women's attitudes towards remote working revealed that the majority of respondents perceived their conditions as positive. The high willingness of female job seekers to find remote employment was empirically confirmed. The authors found this form of employment to be beneficial in promoting female employment (Tonkikh *et al.*, 2019).

Conclusions regarding the positive role of flexible forms of employment in the activation of women in the Russian labor market were also presented by other researchers who indicated that such solutions are particularly beneficial for activating rural female residents and women raising children (Blinova *et al.*, 2014). Additionally, in Hungary, the promotion of female employment occurs through increasing the use of flexible forms of employment. The research stated that these

solutions should be family-friendly, particularly for women raising children. The authors further argue that the introduction of such solutions increases the adaptability of companies and that there is a need for more knowledge of managers on this topic (Essosy and Vinkoczi, 2018).

Therefore, in countries where the degree of labor activation of women is relatively low and gender equality at the workplace still needs to be significantly improved, nonstandard forms of employment tend to be perceived as beneficial for women. Furthermore, this perception is largely related to the need for women to combine their work with family life, including childcare. But the acceptance of women's working roles increasing (Motiejūnaitė, 2010).

A number of recent research results, however, show that the gender perspective presented above is not relevant for countries where the presence of women in the labor market is well established and the *gender gap* is not so pronounced. Results show that work-life conflict is experienced by both women and men. Both women and men feel they have to adapt their family lives to their professional needs. According to research, this transformation mainly concerns middle-class families (Rincón and Martínez, 2020). In-depth research on preferences for combining on-site and home-based work revealed that, to a relatively large extent, these preferences are independent of gender and the caregiving factor. These conclusions were drawn, among others, from a study in which 187 participants were imprisoned. A preference for approximately two remote working days per week was revealed. No significant differences were observed between men, women, parents, nonparents, fathers, and mothers in their choice of the number of days of discretionary remote working (Sherman, 2020). Therefore, creating conditions that improve work-life balance should become the standard independent of the employee's gender.

Furthermore, research on the employment of women in the IT sector showed that women are highly career-oriented, involved in their careers and experience fewer conflicts related to work-life balance than expected. According to the authors, to overcome the problem of a low percentage of women working in the IT sector, it is necessary not to offer them flexible forms of employment but to take measures to combat gender and age stereotypes in the workplace (Lamolla and González Ramos, 2020). Similarly, research in higher education in the UK showed a rather stigmatizing role of nonstandard forms of employment. It was shown that the use of such forms of employment, especially those with a protracted nature, can suppress women's leadership aspirations due to the lack of career development opportunities and lead to a sense of alienation from the professional community and even personal difficulties such as feelings of isolation and poor self-esteem. It was concluded that to develop academic careers and leadership, women usually need to first gain permanence in the organization, guaranteed by a long-term form of employment

(Vicary and Jones, 2017). In the context of these research results, presenting nonstandard forms of employment as a solution for women that facilitates their caretaking roles may be perceived as unfavorable and stigmatizing for women, especially those who plan their careers within industries with attractive jobs that offer development opportunities and relatively high salaries.

The perception of the advantages of nonstandard forms in the context of the gender criterion is currently ambiguous and evolving. It is stated in the literature that the gender gap is a phenomenon that has a territorial, geographical, historical, economic and cultural context, so there are differences from country to country (Niță, 2019). Perceptions of the benefits of nonstandard forms of employment are also contextual. An important component of this context is the role of women in individual cultures, the relationship between a woman's role in family and professional life and how this relationship compares to that observed in men. In countries with greater gender equality, women's work is seen more as providing career development and not just having a job in general.

Further results of the review refer to an attempt to answer the question of what motives induce women more precisely to accept nonstandard forms of employment and what interests such work may entail. It is recognized that in relation to work, women manifest certain expectations and needs that may change over the life course as women develop in professional and personal terms. The results of the research conducted on the criteria of choosing the form of employment showed that the most significant criteria are the following: (1) free time, (2) career opportunities, (3) monthly salary, (4) income stability, (5) a reasonable workday, and (5) the ability to perform work outside the home.

The results also showed the high importance of working in women's lives. It was concluded that women do not choose between working and not working but between alternative forms of employment. It is worth noting, however, that the study assumed *a priori* that women's careers should be balanced with family life and that women are relatively free to choose their form of employment (Busygina *et al.*, 2019). Some research results refer to more precisely defined forms of employment, e.g., self-employment. A study in Austria, where one-person enterprises already account for more than 50% of all enterprises, identified primary motives for self-employment such as self-realization and working without a hierarchy and partly identified the lack of opportunities for standard forms of employment (Bögenhold and Klinglmair, 2017). Examining macrolevel patterns of self-employment shows the diversity of this form of employment. Self-employment is a heterogeneous category that can expose people to the risk of precariousness and poverty, but it can also be a form of satisfying the interests of individuals, including economic interests, and contribute to job creation and economic growth for society (Bögenhold, 2019).

It was shown in a study conducted in Colombia that self-employed women reported improvements in the quality of employment evaluated by parameters such as: (1) social security coverage, (2) earnings, (3) social dialogue, (4) job satisfaction, and (5) reconciling work and family life. Earnings were identified as the factor most relevant to improving the quality of employment (Farné and Vergara, 2015).

Many studies, however, reveal shortcomings in the realization of workers' interests in the case of nonstandard forms of employment. One such problem is the paucity of information, which, as shown by research conducted in Germany, has a negative impact on the social climate and the possibility of employee development. The research highlighted this problem, especially in relation to the phenomenon of performing several jobs (Kottwitz *et al.*, 2017). Workers employed in nonstandard forms located in peripheral spheres of employment may not be covered by activities aimed at developing their competencies and careers. This relationship was supported by the example of agency workers (temporary work agency workers). The limited job security accompanying this form of employment means that both companies and agencies do not invest significantly in the development of employees' competences (Håkansson and Isidorsson, 2015).

One of the deferred effects of working in nonstandard forms may be lower retirement benefits. Since these forms have been present in labor markets for a long time, this finding has been confirmed empirically. Research in Germany showed that two factors are particularly important in reducing the level of future pensions: late entry into the labor market and working in diversified and unstable employment (Tophoven and Tisch, 2016). Commonly cited disadvantages associated with nonstandard forms of employment include the following: high levels of job insecurity, unpredictable working hours, low pay, and limited opportunities for career progression (Kalleberg *et al.*, 2000; McGovern *et al.*, 2004). From this perspective, employees are considered to accept nonstandard forms of employment because their choices are limited (Buddelmeyer, McVicar, and Wooden 2015).

Therefore, when analyzing the degree to which the interests of employees working in nonstandard forms are met, involuntary nonstandard employment (INE) seems to be an important category. When examining this category in an international context, the INE index was assumed to reflect poor working conditions in nonstandard forms of employment. The results of the analyses showed significant differences between countries in the prevalence of INE, which is the highest in Spain, Portugal, and Poland. INE is typically lower in countries with Anglo-Saxon and Nordic models of a welfare state. Econometric analyses have further shown that women are more exposed to work in INE (Green and Livanos, 2017).

Some authors stressed the need for greater protection of the interests of the employees working in nonstandard forms and the need to study the effect of these forms on employee well-being. From this perspective, nonstandard forms of employment are perceived as the cause of a lack of job security and a barrier to ensuring social justice due to the decreasing role of trade unions. A study demonstrated the correlation of low job security associated with the presence of nonstandard forms of employment with the level of unionization (Essers, 2017). The high percentage of nonstandard forms of employment in the labor market is sometimes even indicated as a determinant of a crisis in employment (Klimenko *et al.*, 2017). It is recommended that solutions be developed through social dialogue to ensure the protection of all labor market participants and reduce gender inequalities (Novikova *et al.*, 2019; Benach *et al.*, 2016). Recommendations for further research in this area emphasize the importance of the gender factor, especially in conjunction with other variables (Benach *et al.*, 2016).

2.3 Basic Categories: A Definitional Approach

Nonstandard forms of employment:

In many studies, nonstandard forms of employment are not precisely defined, and the characteristics of precarious employment are assigned to them *a priori*. The definitions of precarious employment accentuate the negative features of this employment, such as uncertainty and instability, low wages and economic deprivation, limited workplace rights and social protection, and powerlessness to exercise legally granted workplace rights (Standing, 2011; Benach *et al.*, 2014).

The assumptions of this project included a departure from assuming a negative perception of nonstandard forms of employment. Therefore, it was necessary to adopt objective criteria for dividing forms of employment into standard and nonstandard. This was based on the criterion of the type of contract/agreement concluded with the worker. If it is an employment contract based on labor law regulations concluded directly with the worker, the form is considered standard. Nonstandard forms include self-employment, contracts based on civil law such as contracts of mandates or contracts for specific work (used in some countries), agency employment and some types of outsourcing (*agency or outsourced workers*), and unregistered employment (Leighton *et al.*, 2007; Cappeli and Keller, 2013). This approach to nonstandard forms of employment does not force the assumption that every form of nonstandard employment must be precarious. This seems to be an important assumption contributing to the objectivity of the research.

Employee interests:

The term employee interests is not clearly defined in the literature. Interests are most often described as the manifestation of the advantages (Cambridge Dictionary) and expectations (Lotko *et al.*, 2016) of employees in relation to the performed work. It is noted that employees who have their expectations strive to achieve them, and if

this does not happen, they eventually seek work for another employer. The explorations of the interests of employees are conducted in a rather scattered way. They are concerned, for example, economic or professional aspects (Carter, 1940).

The problems of interests viewed as employee expectations have been addressed in reference to the research on motivation to work (Lobanova, 2015), the possibility of activating this motivation by meeting the employee interests; or showing the relationship between interests and future job search, choice of education, or the currently performed job (Harackiewicz and Hulleman, 2010; Hidi and Renninger, 2006).

Consideration is also given to job expectations and satisfaction or interests are combined with motivation theory, stakeholder theory, and competence theory (Haidong and Yu-jun, 2006). There are also views that the advantages and employee expectations are not static or stable because they depend on many variables such as personality, experience, culture, and peer influence (Oginni *et al.*, 2018).

Together, this means that there is no clearly defined list of employee interests to become the basis for research. Individual authors have created such lists mainly for their research, e.g., the strong interest inventory in the context of career development (Staggs, 2004; Katz *et al.*, 1999; Prince, 1998). In addition, there are statements in the literature that it is critical to be aware of the expectations of current employees, Maxwell and Knox (2009) state that this key issue is too often overlooked. There are no clear indications as to the rationale and means of taking measures to make it easier for employers to meet employees halfway and respect their interests related to performing the work. Therefore, the aim of the present study is to bring certain arguments in this regard.

Bearing in mind the abovementioned shortcomings of creating a closed list of employees' interests and the indications of authors who state that the list of employees' interests is subject to constant change (Baker, 1996), such a list for the purposes of the research presented in this study was created by referencing the studies available in the literature. References were made to the statements that the essential expectations of employees include adequate remuneration, training and development opportunities, promotion opportunities, safe and healthy working conditions, welfare, and the quality of professional life (Oginni *et al.*, 2018; Gableta and Bodak, 2012; Zhong *et al.*, 2017).

Therefore, the authors' questionnaire for the recognition of employee interests in different forms of employment was developed, using, among others, the suggestions indicated by the abovementioned authors, taking into account the changes in the economic reality.

2.4 Meeting the Interests of Women Working in Nonstandard Forms: Research Hypotheses

The dominant findings in the analyses are that women work in nonstandard forms of employment more often than men. This position, however, should be verified by considering the current national circumstances.

H1: Women now work in nonstandard forms of employment more often than men.

Importantly, it is emphasized that women work in involuntary nonstandard forms of employment more often than men. The verification of this position seems to be particularly important due to the assumption formulated in the related literature that the lack of choice of the form of employment coexists with lower quality jobs and a lower level of meeting employee interests.

H2: Women work involuntarily in nonstandard forms of employment more often than men.

H3: The perception of the degree of meeting employee interests by women working in nonstandard forms of employment depends on the opportunity to choose a specific form.

The analysis of previous research results further indicates that meeting employee interests may depend on the form of nonstandard employment. Differences in the perception of motivations and meeting employee interests were identified, among others, within forms of nonstandard employment such as self-employment or working for a temporary employment agency.

H4: The perception of the degree of meeting employee interests by women working in nonstandard forms of employment depends on the type of nonstandard employment.

The analysis shows that the phenomenon of meeting the interests of women working in nonstandard forms is not perceived unequivocally and is evolving. Increasingly, it is not so much a question of providing women with opportunities to accept work that can be combined with family life and caring responsibilities but of ensuring that women have attractive jobs and career opportunities. This is the rationale for the explorations of *what interests of women can currently be met by working in nonstandard forms of employment*.

Such research should be conducted without assuming *a priori* a positive or a negative role of nonstandard forms of employment. It is also worth noting that a significant part of the analyses to date have been based on data from available databases and labor market surveys (international or national). Most studies have failed to include in-depth job characterization. In this context, research designed to collect data directly from employees, conducted on large representative samples and identifying the degree to which individual employee interests are met seems valuable.

3. Material and Methods

The paper presents the results of quantitative research conducted using the CAWI technique on a sample of 1,000 working Poles. The survey was conducted in late 2019 and early 2020. A ratio developed based on BAEL (Polish: Badanie Aktywności Ekonomicznej Ludności, meaning Labor Force Survey) data was used to present the distribution of the sample (see Table 1). The aim of the BAEL is to obtain information on the size and structure of labor resources. The survey was conducted by Statistics Poland (in accordance with the methodology of the International Labour Organization).

Table 1. Ratio for the presentation of the sample distribution

	Women	Men	Sum
Working according to BAEL (working age)	6,982,000	8,846,000	15,828,000
Working age	10,981,498	12,410,465	23,391,963
Ratio	0.636	0.71	

Source: Own study.

The study was based on stratified random sampling, which allowed for inference within individual categories (strata). The proportional stratified sampling method was used. Table 2 shows the distribution of the research sample with the ratio used to its preparation. The adopted methodology including the design of the research sample allowed us to conduct representative research with respect to the gender and age of working Poles. The study was conducted on a sample of n=1,000, with the sample size calculated using the following parameters: population of 15,828,000, fraction size 0.1, and confidence level 0.95.

Table 2. Distribution of the sample

Distribution	Women	Men
18-19 years	15	18
20-24 years	43	50
25-29 years	52	61
30-34 years	61	70
35-39 years	63	73
40-44 years	59	67
45-49 years	49	56
50-54 years	46	51
55-59 years	53	55

60-64 years	0	58
Total	559	441

Source: Own study.

The analysis of the results was performed using the methods of descriptive statistics (mean values and distribution of responses) and statistical tests to check the correlations between variables. A chi-squared test was calculated for the categorical variables. Nonparametric tests were used to examine the correlations between the assessment of employee interests and respondent characteristics because the assumption of group equality was not met. Depending on the number of groups, the U statistic of the Mann-Whitney test (two groups) was calculated or the Kruskal-Wallis test (three groups) was used. For hypothesis testing, a two-sided asymptotic significance level was set at $p < 0.05$. The calculations were performed using the PQ Stat 18.4 software.

4. Results

H1: Women now work in nonstandard forms of employment more often than men.

The first hypothesis was verified for the entire study sample ($n=1000$). As part of the first research hypothesis, working in nonstandard forms of employment was compared between men and women (Table 3). Statistical analysis of the frequency of employment based on nonstandard forms of employment and the frequency of this type of employment according to gender revealed no significant differences ($p > 0.05$): the chi-squared test $\chi^2(1) = 0.01$ and $p = 0.97$. This means that current working (at the time of the survey) in nonstandard forms of employment does not depend on gender. The first hypothesis was rejected.

Table 3. Working in nonstandard forms of employment by gender

	Working in nonstandard forms of employment					
	Yes		No		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Woman	84	19.0	357	81.0	441	100.0
Man	107	19.1	452	80.9	559	100.0
Total	191	19.1	809	80.9	1000	100.0

Source: Own study.

H2: Women work involuntarily in nonstandard forms of employment more often than men.

The second hypothesis was tested among men and women working in nonstandard forms of employment ($n=191$). Considering the possibility of choosing the form of employment, a distinction was made between people who voluntarily accepted employment in nonstandard forms and those who did not have such an opportunity (see Table 4). Statistical analysis of the voluntary choice of employment in nonstandard forms of employment and the frequency of this type of employment

according to gender revealed a statistically significant relationship at the level of the adopted significance ($p > 0.05$): the chi-squared test $\chi^2(1) = 3.73$ and $p = 0.05$. This means that the voluntary choice of working in nonstandard forms of employment is related to gender. The second hypothesis was confirmed, indicating that women accepting employment in nonstandard forms have less influence on the choice of this form of employment than men.

Table 4. *Voluntary choice of employment in nonstandard forms by gender*

	Working in nonstandard forms of employment					
	Voluntary		Involuntary		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Woman	62	73.8	22	26.2	84	100.0
Man	91	85.0	16	15.0	107	100.0
Total	153	72.8	38	27.2	191	100.0

Source: Own study.

H3: The perception of the degree of meeting employee interests by women working in nonstandard forms of employment depends on the opportunity to choose a specific form.

The third hypothesis was tested in a group of women working in nonstandard forms of employment ($n = 84$). The statistical analysis of the relationship between the assessment of the possibility of meeting the interests of employees working in nonstandard forms of employment and the possibility of choosing a particular form revealed no significant relationships ($p > 0.05$). The medians in both groups were $Me = 3$. The result of the Mann-Whitney test indicated that the observed differences in average scores were not statistically significant with $U(2) = 581.5$ and $p = 0.29$. This means that the assessment of the possibility of meeting employee interests does not depend on the voluntary choice of nonstandard forms of employment. The hypothesis was rejected based on statistical analysis. The possibility of choosing the form of nonstandard employment does not translate into the assessment of the degree of meeting employee interests, as reflected in the mean score (see Table 5). The mean assessment of the possibility of meeting employee interests in nonstandard forms of employment according to the voluntary choice of employment is 2.9.

Table 5. *Mean assessment of the possibility of meeting employee interests while working in nonstandard forms of employment depending on the voluntary choice of employment on a scale ranging from 1 (definitely not) to 5 (definitely yes)*

Meeting the interests in the enterprise while working in nonstandard forms	Voluntary employment		
	Voluntary	Involuntary	Mean
	3.0	2.7	2.9

Source: Own study.

Respondents employed voluntarily in nonstandard forms rate the opportunity to meet the following interests significantly higher on average (Table 6), assistance from trade unions/worker's councils ($p<0.01$), influence on the choice of colleagues ($p<0.01$), influence on the choice of remuneration components ($p<0.05$), participation in management (codeciding) ($p<0.05$), and participation in management (consultation) ($p=0.05$).

Table 6. Mean assessment of the possibility of meeting employee interests while working in nonstandard forms of employment depending on the voluntary choice of employment on a scale ranging from 1 (definitely not) to 5 (definitely yes)

Employee interests	Voluntary (Vol)	Involuntary (inVol)	Difference in Vol-inVol group assessment	Significance of differences (Mann-Whitney U test)
Assistance from trade unions/workers' councils	3.1	2.1	1.0	$p<0.01$
Influence on the choice of the colleagues	3.2	2.4	0.8	$p<0.01$
Influence on the choice of remuneration components	3.3	2.6	0.7	$p<0.05$
Protection and access to social benefits	3.2	2.6	0.6	$p=0.11$
Participation in management (consultation)	3.2	2.6	0.6	$p=0.05$
Participation in management (codeciding)	3.1	2.5	0.6	$p<0.05$
Assistance during redundancy	2.8	2.3	0.5	$p=0.09$
Health services at the employer's expense	3	2.6	0.4	$p=0.33$
Transparent rules for promotion	3.3	2.9	0.4	$p=0.26$
Salaries adequate for duties	3.6	3.3	0.3	$p=0.40$
Formal procedures of expressing opinions	3.4	3.1	0.3	$p=0.37$
Adequate information flow	3.8	3.6	0.2	$p=0.55$
Opportunity for professional development	3.5	3.4	0.1	$p=0.58$
Good occupational safety and health	3.9	3.9	0.0	$p=0.60$
Training at the employer's expense	3.3	3.3	0.0	$p=0.74$

Good atmosphere in the workplace	4	4	0.0	p=0.87
Employment stability	3.3	3.4	-0.1	p=0.64
Clear criteria for the evaluation of task performance	3.9	4	-0.1	p=0.48
Influence on working time organization	3.6	3.9	-0.3	p=0.21

Source: Own study.

H4: The perception of the degree of meeting employee interests by women working in nonstandard forms of employment depends on the type of nonstandard employment.

The fourth hypothesis was tested in a group of women working in nonstandard forms of employment (n=84). To test the above hypothesis, nonstandard forms of employment were divided into three groups: CM - contract of mandate or another form of contract based on the civil law code, SE - self-employed, and OT - other (which mainly includes work through temporary employment agencies and unregistered employment). The statistical analysis of the relationship between the assessment of the possibility of meeting the interests of employees working in nonstandard forms of employment and the form of employment (divided into three groups) revealed no significant relationships ($p > 0.05$). The results of the Kruskal-Wallis test indicated no differences between groups, $H(2) = 0.71$ and $p = 0.70$. This means that the assessment of the possibility of meeting employee interests does not depend on the form of nonstandard employment. The third hypothesis was rejected based on statistical analysis. This leads to the conclusion that the type of nonstandard form of employment does not affect the assessment of meeting employee interests among the women surveyed, which is reflected in the mean assessment (Table 7). The mean assessment of the possibility of meeting employee interests in nonstandard forms of employment according to the form of nonstandard employment was at a similar level of 2.9.

Table 7. Mean assessment of the possibility of meeting employee interests within working in nonstandard forms of employment depending on the form of employment on a scale ranging from 1 (definitely not) to 5 (definitely yes)

Meeting the interests in the enterprise while working in nonstandard forms	Form of employment			Mean
	CM	SE	OT	
	2.9	2.8	3.0	2.9

Note: Abbreviations: CM - contract of mandate or other forms of contract based on the civil law code, SE - self-employed, and OT - other

Source: Own study.

Considering meeting individual employee interests, differences were observed for two aspects in the average assessment of the possibility of meeting the interests

depending on the form of employment (Table 8). The group of women employed based on the contract of mandate assessed the possibility of formal procedures for the expression of opinions and transparent rules of promotion significantly higher ($p < 0.05$) compared to the self-employed women and those employed in other forms than based on the civil law code.

Table 8. Mean assessment of the possibility of meeting employee interests while working in nonstandard forms of employment depending on the form of employment on a scale ranging from 1 (definitely not) to 5 (definitely yes)

Employee interests	CM	SE	OT	Significance of differences (Kruskal-Wallis test)
Good occupational safety and health	3.8	4.3	3.7	$p=0.08$
Clear criteria for the evaluation of task performance	3.8	4.1	4.1	$p=0.24$
Good atmosphere in the workplace	3.8	4.2	4.1	$p=0.50$
Adequate information flow	3.8	3.9	3.7	$p=0.72$
Influence on working time organization	3.6	3.8	3.7	$p=0.15$
Training at the employer's expense	3.4	3.3	3	$p=0.53$
Salaries adequate for duties	3.3	3.9	3.6	$p=0.16$
Opportunity for professional development	3.3	3.9	3.6	$p=0.15$
Employment stability	3.2	3.5	3.4	$p=0.59$
Protection and access to social benefits	3.1	3.1	2.9	$p=0.70$
Influence on the choice of the colleagues	3.0	2.9	3.2	$p=0.86$
Influence on the choice of remuneration components	3.0	3.1	3.4	$p=0.54$
Formal procedures of expressing opinions	3.0	3.8	3.7	$p < 0.05$ CM < SE* CM < I
Health services at the employer's expense	2.9	2.9	2.8	$p=0.88$
Participation in management (consultation)	2.9	3.1	3.3	$p=0.56$
Transparent rules for promotion	2.8	3.6	3.6	$p < 0.05$ CM < SE* CM < I
Participation in management (codeciding)	2.8	3	3.1	$p=0.77$
Assistance from trade unions/workers' councils	2.7	3.1	2.9	$p=0.55$

Assistance during redundancy	2.6	2.8	2.9	p=0.70
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Note: Abbreviations: CM - contract of mandate or other forms of contract based on the civil law code, SE - self-employed, and OT – other.

*The significance of differences between groups was evaluated using the Dunn-Bonferroni post hoc test.

Source: Own study.

The results of the survey also showed how individual interests (the degree of meeting them) are perceived by women working in nonstandard forms of employment compared to those working in standard forms. Table 9 summarizes the responses concerning the possibility of realizing the interests of employees in the opinion of the female respondents surveyed (n=441).

Table 9. Mean assessment of the possibility of meeting employee interests while working in standard and nonstandard forms of employment on a scale ranging from 1 (definitely not) to 5 (definitely yes)

Employee interests	Standard S	Nonstandard NS	Difference in S-NS group assessment	Significance of differences (Mann-Whitney U test)
Employment stability	4.1	3.3	0.8	p<0.001
Protection and access to social benefits	3.7	3	0.7	p<0.001
Health services at the employer's expense	3.4	2.7	0.7	p<0.001
Good occupational safety and health	4.2	3.9	0.3	p<0.001
Training at the employer's expense	3.6	3.3	0.3	p<0.05
Assistance during redundancy	3	2.7	0.3	p<0.05
Assistance from trade unions/workers' councils	3	2.8	0.2	p=0.24
Influence on the choice of the colleagues	3.1	3	0.1	p=0.41
Participation in management (codeciding)	3	2.9	0.1	p=0.48
Transparent rules for promotion	3.3	3.2	0.1	p=0.28
Clear criteria for the evaluation of task performance	3.9	3.9	0	p=0.59
Influence on the choice of remuneration components	3.1	3.1	0	p=0.84
Opportunity for professional development	3.5	3.5	0	p=0.99
Participation in management (consultation)	3.1	3.1	0	p=0.80

Salaries adequate for duties	3.4	3.5	-0.1	p=0.50
Formal procedures of expressing opinions	3.3	3.4	-0.1	p=0.58
Adequate information flow	3.6	3.8	-0.2	p=0.32
Good atmosphere in the workplace	3.8	4	-0.2	p=0.20
Influence on working time organization	3.5	3.7	-0.2	p=0.22

Source: Own study.

The response distributions presented in the table are sorted from the highest rated by the group of female respondents working in standard forms of employment. Group differences were calculated in the analysis using the Mann-Whitney U test. On average, women working in standard forms of employment rated employment stability ($p<0.001$), protection and access to social benefits ($p<0.001$), health services at the employer's expense ($p<0.001$), good occupational safety and health ($p<0.001$), training at the employer's expense ($p<0.05$), and assistance during redundancy ($p<0.05$) higher compared to women employed in nonstandard forms.

Furthermore, women working in nonstandard forms of employment rated the influence on working time organization, good atmosphere in the workplace, adequate information flow, formal procedures of expressing opinions, and salaries adequate for duties higher, but the differences in the mean assessments were small (0.2 and 0.1 points) and statistically insignificant. In addition, no differences were found in the following employee interests: clear criteria for the evaluation of task performance, influence on the choice of remuneration components, opportunity for professional development, and participation in management (consultation).

5. Discussion

Research conducted on a representative sample of working Poles showed that working in nonstandard forms of employment does not depend on gender. These results are in opposition to the traditional approach to the gender gap, which finds that women work in nonstandard forms more often than men (Benach *et al.*, 2016; Acker, 1999; Tapia *et al.*, 2017; Williamson and Baird, 2014; Bondy, 2018; Klimenko *et al.*, 2017; Niță, 2019). It is worth noting that such results were obtained based on current empirical data from a country where the use of nonstandard forms in the labor market remains one of the highest in the European Union (Eurostat, 2021) while the degree of labor activation of women remains significantly lower than that of men (difference of 14.4 percentage points) (European Commission, 2020).

Despite the frequent use of nonstandard forms of employment, women do not prefer this form of employment to a greater extent than men. Furthermore, a significant and higher than EU average percentage of women in Poland remain economically

inactive (6.7% of all women aged 15-64, i.e., 2% more than the EU average) (European Commission, 2020). Therefore, the high range of the use of nonstandard forms of employment and their relative ubiquity in the labor market do not coincide with women's preference for these forms of employment and do not contribute significantly to increasing their professional activity.

The study demonstrated that the voluntary choice of working in nonstandard forms of employment is related to gender. This confirms previous results indicating that women accepting working in nonstandard forms of employment have fewer choices when choosing these forms than men (Green and Livanos, 2017). More often than in the case of men, working in nonstandard forms of employment is associated with the lack of alternatives rather than with the perception of the advantages of using these forms. In addition, according to women, the perception of the degree of meeting employee interests in nonstandard forms of employment does not depend on the possibility of its choice and remains at an average level (assessment: 2.9 with a maximum of 5). The detailed analysis, however, showed that within the individual interests of working women, the possibility of choice increases the assessment of meeting these interests.

Surprisingly, the respondents clearly indicated employee interests related to direct and indirect employee participation including trade union assistance and participation through codecision and consultation. Therefore, the possibility of choosing a nonstandard form of employment increases the assessment of employee interests related to employee participation. These findings are significant in light of the problems identified in previous literature related to employment in nonstandard forms such as a sense of lack of influence on the professional situation, limited access to information and even a sense of isolation for women working in such forms (Vicary and Jones, 2017; Kottwitz *et al.*, 2017).

In Poland, there is a large variety of nonstandard forms of employment, including self-employment, forms based on civil law, and employment through temporary work agencies. The analysis of the research results, however, did not confirm that the type of nonstandard form of employment has a statistically significant effect on the perception of meeting the employee interests of women working in these forms of employment. This resulted from the analysis of an overall indicator for assessing the degree of meeting employee interests. Detailed analysis revealed that women working based on a contract of mandate rated formal procedures for expressing opinions and transparent rules for promotion higher than others. Such results do not support the views presented in some studies that self-employment offers particularly high opportunities for working women to pursue their interests (Farné and Vergara, 2015).

Comparison of meeting the employee interests of women working in nonstandard forms to those employed in standard forms was considered particularly important. The results lead to conclusions regarding the positive characteristics of the jobs of

women working in standard forms of employment. These include employment stability, protection and access to social benefits, health services at the employer's expense, good occupational safety and health, training at the employer's expense and assistance during redundancy. Meeting these interests of women working in standard forms of employment was assessed higher than those of women employed in nonstandard forms. Similarly, the positive characteristics of the jobs of women working in nonstandard employment were identified. These include influence on working time organization, a good atmosphere in the workplace, an adequate information flow, formal procedures for expressing opinions, and salaries adequate to duties.

Based on the hierarchy established, it can be found that the highest assessment for women employed in nonstandard forms was given to meeting employee interests such as a good atmosphere in the workplace, good occupational safety and health, clear criteria for the evaluation of task performance, an adequate information flow, and influence on working time organization. These results are consistent with some of the previous findings, including the advantages of standard forms of employment in terms of employment stability, social protection, and greater employer commitment to investing in employee training (Håkansson and Isidorsson, 2015).

Studies, however, have failed to demonstrate that women working in standard forms of employment rate their opportunities for professional development higher. Consequently, nonstandard forms are not stigmatizing in this respect. Nonstandard forms have also not been shown to be associated with impaired access to information. Therefore, previous findings such as (1) the relevance of the importance of forms of employment that guarantee long-term stability for women's career development (Vicary and Jones, 2017) and (2) the coexistence of the paucity of information with employment in nonstandard forms (Kottwitz *et al.*, 2017) were not confirmed. It is worth noting, however, that the presented discussion of the research results is not in all cases based on comparisons of quantitative research results. Some of the previous findings were formulated based on qualitative research through analytical generalization. As a general rule, case studies capture a broader spectrum of factors, including the specificity of individual sectors.

6. Conclusions

The positive effect of nonstandard forms of employment on the labor activation of women has been traditionally emphasized in the literature. The results obtained in this study do not confirm such an effect. In Poland, despite the wide range and diversity of nonstandard forms of employment, women do not prefer these forms, do not work in these forms more often than men and, moreover, work in nonstandard forms more often involuntarily. The research failed to show that the type of nonstandard form of employment has a significant effect on women's perception of meeting their interests.

It was shown that women who voluntarily accept employment in nonstandard forms rate the possibility of direct and indirect employee participation higher. This may indicate the individual character of the organizations in which these women are employed: the possibility of choosing the form of employment at the beginning coexists with the possibility of participation and codeciding already during the work. This seems to be an important recommendation for management practice: women value the choice and codeciding in the workplace.

The prevalence of employment in standard forms observed in the research is related to the traditional perception of the workplace, with important employee interests including stability and employee protection by the employer. Women for whom it is important to pursue these interests are unlikely to work in nonstandard forms. Furthermore, the positive aspects of employment of women in nonstandard forms revealed in the research include mainly a good atmosphere, the possibility to influence working time organization, a good information flow, clear evaluation criteria and linking the remuneration with the performed tasks. The advantage of nonstandard forms of employment is perceived primarily by women who prefer to pursue these employment interests.

The results presented may be useful in attempts to predict the consequences of the spread of non-standard forms of employment, including economic activation of women, in countries with labor markets characterized by a low-level use of these forms. It seems that the confrontation of the revealed tendencies with other factors, such as the respondent's age, performing caring functions by them or the specificity of the sector they work in, are important further objectives of research.

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