

Miloš Dašić*, Nenad Mihajlov, Snežana Mihajlov

Toplica Academy of Applied Studies, Department of Business Studies Blace,
Kralja Petra I Street, No. 1, 18420 Blace, Serbia

The Gender-Job Satisfaction Paradox: the Evidence of Serbia

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Abstract:

Research Question: This study investigates gender differences in job satisfaction among employees in Serbia. **Motivation:** The main goal of the research is examine and providing evidence the existence and scope of the paradox of gender job satisfaction. In his paper, Clark (1997) proves that women have greater job satisfaction than men. The author suggests that, in general, the higher satisfaction of women at work may be a consequence of lower job expectations as a result of the worse position in the labor market that women have had in the past. **Idea:** The starting point of this research is the assumption that employed women are on average more satisfied than men, despite the inferior position they occupy in the labor market. **Data:** The research was conducted among 468 employees in six privately owned IT and publishing companies and one state-owned company (The Pension and Disability Insurance Fund of the Republic of Serbia). The structured questionnaire was used and distributed during January 2021. **Tools:** The questionnaire has two parts. The first part pertains to the respondents' demographic information such as gender, age, level of education, the sectoral structure of the company in which they are employed, management positions and years of work experience. The second part of the questionnaire referred to questions related to job satisfaction, i.e. it contained 8 questions in accordance with the Job Satisfaction Questionnaire (Clark, 1997), which measured the degree of satisfaction with aspects of job including general satisfaction with current job. **Findings:** The results research show the women are more dissatisfied with their job compared to men, despite the fact that the distinction in job satisfaction between women and men is statistically insignificant. Finding that women on the average more dissatisfaction with their jobs than man appears to be contradictory to the most of studies report that women more satisfaction with their jobs than men. Accordingly, the idea of the gender-job satisfaction paradox in conditions of high levels of gender inequality that characterizes the labor market in Serbia cannot be confirmed and accepted as a universal phenomenon. **Contribution:** The paper adds existing knowledge about the job-gender paradox. Evidence that there are no differences in job satisfaction between female and male employees suggests that gender discrepancies is becoming less significant.

Keywords: Job satisfaction, satisfaction with aspects of job, gender, gender-job satisfaction paradox, labour market

JEL Classification: J28, J14, J16.

1. Introduction

Despite the fact that employed women have lower wages, poorer job conditions and higher levels of discrimination, as well as fewer promotion opportunities, they often show the same or „higher level of job satisfaction than men“ (Perugini & Vladislavljevic, 2019, p.133; Clark, 1997; Sousa-Poza & Sousa-Poza, 2003; Kaiser, 2007), which is recognized as a gender-job satisfaction paradox. The aim of this paper is to contribute to this literature by providing empirical evidence that the idea of the gender-job satisfaction paradox in conditions of a high degree of gender inequality cannot be confirmed and accepted as a universal phenomenon. The results of this study show that women are less satisfied with their job than men, although the difference in job satisfaction between women and men is statistically insignificant. The results also show

1 Corresponding author: Miloš Dašić, e-mail: dasicmil@yahoo.com

that men and women are not equally affected by certain aspects of job (job security and working hours), and that differences in the effects of these aspects of job cannot be explained by gender differences in the labor market but by the economic sector.

The paper complements existing knowledge on this topic by: (i) providing evidence of the absence of a gender-job satisfaction paradox; (ii) differences in satisfaction of job security and working hours between women and men are not the result of different labor market positions, they are already a consequence of the fear of employed women of losing their jobs and financial resources, as well as the need to balance between work and private life, bearing in mind their still traditional role in Serbian society when it comes to caring for children and other family members.

2. The paradox in gender-job satisfaction

Job satisfaction talk to the emotions of employees to job and varied aspects of job. Simply put, „job satisfaction is extent to which people like (satisfaction) or dislike (dissatisfaction) their jobs“ (Spector, 1997, p. 2). Job satisfaction is „an affective (that is, emotional) reaction to one's job, resulting from the incumbent's comparison of actual outcomes with those that are desired (expected, deserved, and so on).“ (Cranny et al., 1992, p. 1). Very similar to them, Locke defines job satisfaction a “pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from an appraisal of one's job or job experiences” (Locke, 1976, p. 1300). In general, job satisfaction is the emotional (affective) response of employees to a particular job and the responses are the result of an individual comparison of achieve and expectations, needs, desires or an estimate of fairness. Job satisfaction is therefore a subjective and individual feeling that reflects whether personal needs and expectations at job have been met.

Today, two basic access to the research of job satisfaction are recognized in the literature. According to the first, holistic approach, job satisfaction is seen as a one-dimensional construct and is defined as an affective relationship in which an individual's emotions towards job are expressed through his attachment to job, commitment to job and the importance of job for him. According to another, additive approach, job satisfaction is a multidimensional construct when they make satisfaction with certain aspects of job, so that what an individual feels about job is actually a sum satisfied with certain dimensions of job.

Job satisfaction is one of the most commonly studied phenomena in the field of organizational behavior. The interest of scientists in studying job satisfaction stems from the need for subjective evaluation of working conditions, and managers and researchers for its final organizational outcomes. Due to the strong effects it manifests in organizational conditions, job satisfaction is a multidisciplinary and timeless concept applicable to all professions, jobs and contexts. Clark (1997, p. 343) highlights three powerful reasons for have need of to survey job satisfaction. First, job satisfaction is, in addition to marital and family satisfaction, the most important predictor of overall well-being. Second, job satisfaction is relate to worker behaviour. Third, job satisfaction depends on how likely it is that „employees to come to a proxy measure of utility at work.“

Given the impact of job satisfaction on worker productivity, absence and turnover, but also the productivity of organizations, knowing the determinants of job satisfaction and understanding gender differences in job satisfaction can have serious economic implications (Hauret & Williams, 2017). Hodson (1989) listed several possible assumptions to explain the observed gender differences in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s. First, men and women value the same job characteristics differently. The second is that women emphasized their role as "housewives" in relation to paid work. Third, women were more satisfied with their job because they had lower job expectations compared to other women or men. This last explanation has been the center of interest of a great number of papers over the past 20 years.

In his work, Clark (1997) demonstrate that women in the UK are more satisfied with their job compared to men and considered the potential reasons for the existing differences. According to his findings, the gender-job satisfaction gap cannot be fully explained by differences in individual characteristics, job characteristics, job values, relative distribution of income and selection bias, although that factors relevant. The author suggests that, in general, women's higher job satisfaction may be due to lower job expectations resulting “from the poorer position in the labor market that women have held in the past” (Clark, 1997, p.342), which is why „the gender-job satisfaction paradox is expected to be a transitory phenomenon“ (Perugini & Vladislavljevic, 2019, p.130). The job satisfaction gap will disappear when more women do better jobs, or are exposed to environments where they can exceed their gender beliefs, resulting in increased job expectations. At the same time, he believes that for younger and highly educated employees, differences in job satisfaction between women and men are not significant. Compared to other women, younger and highly educated

women have higher job expectations „because they had different role models in early childhood or were exposed to good jobs during their work-life“ (Perugini & Vladisavljevic, 2019, p.130).

Some authors have been focused in examine the gender paradox in different countries and institutional frameworks. Kaiser (2007) studies 15 EU countries and finds that women have greater job satisfaction than men in labor markets that are less favorable for women, confirming Clark's (1997) "hypothesis of expectations." However, Sloane and Williams (2000) suggest an alternative explanation for the differences in job determinants for women and men. Women's job satisfaction would decline when they faced with similar job characteristics as men which means that the gender satisfaction gap refers to the sorting of certain jobs based on different preferences.

Using a set of job orientation data from the 1997 International Social Research Program (ISSP), (Sousa-Poza & Sousa-Poza, 2000) showed that in most countries there are no gender differences in job satisfaction. Out of twenty-one countries in only eight countries, women were more satisfied with their job than men, and the difference in four countries (Great Britain, USA, Hungary, New Zealand) was greater than five percent. Applying a bottom-up psychological model, the authors tried to explain gender inequalities in job satisfaction. The model examine five work inputs (working time and effort) and nine work outputs (earnings and job security) between men and women. In countries where a higher level of work-role outputs for women is recorded, there is also greater job satisfaction among women compared to men. „This is especially the case for women in Great Britain, who have much higher levels than men of (self-perceived) job security, jobs that are useful to society, which help other people, and good relations with management and colleagues“ (Sousa-Poza & Sousa-Poza, 2000, p. 149).

Perugini and Vladisavljevic (2019) use „the 2013 EU Survey on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC)“ (Perugini & Vladisavljevic, 2019, p.131) and find that women in Europe are on average more satisfied with their jobs than men. They also show that there is a substantial disparity in the gender-job satisfaction gap across Europe. The reduction of gender differences in job satisfaction is noticeable in women with low and secondary education who were exposed to environments with higher gender equality in the early stages (probably when job expectations are formed); they find no significant effect for the highly-educated. According to authors, coping with „gender inequality experienced in early stages of life has a persistent effect on beliefs and expectations“ (Perugini & Vladisavljevic, 2019, p.139). It is more likely that women who lived in more gender-equal environments during growing up developed higher expectations of job, which is why their job satisfaction is similar to that of men. Similarly, women who have lived in less equal communities show greater job satisfaction than men, because they not only developed lower expectations due to lower labor market participation, but „might have been “social-ized” to put higher value on aspects of work such as flexibility and social connections“ (Perugini & Vladisavljevic, 2019, p.139).

In accordance with Clark's conclusions (1997), the aim of this research is to contribute to literature of the gender-job paradox, proving that the existence and scope of paradoxes can be the result of a gender-unequal social and economic environment. For this purpose, we use data from the answers of respondents in combination with various indicators of gender difference on the labour market in Serbia.

3. The gender inequality on the labour market in Serbia

Gender equality means equal opportunities, equal visibility and equal representation of men and women in all spheres of private and public life (Cotic, 2016). The position of women on the labor market in Serbia is less favorable than the position of men, as evidenced by lower activity and employment rates with a higher inactivity rate of women. This is the reason why women are characterized as a vulnerable group in the labor market (Government of Republic of Serbia, 2021). Gender inequality has been a consequence for decades of inherited beliefs that are deeply rooted in our mentality and upbringing: traditional views on the role of women in working professional lives and stereotypes about women as less professional.

According to the data from the Labor Force Survey (Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2020), the women employment rate is 41,9%, which is 14,7 percentage points less than the men employment rate (56,6%). „The largest gender gap in the labor market, when it comes to employment, was recorded in the category of persons aged 55-64, where the employment rate of women is 40,5% and the employment rate of men is 60,8%. The employment rate of women aged 25-54 was 10,8 percentage points lower than the employment rate of men of the same age (69,1% versus 79,9%, respectively)“ (Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2020a, p. 70). „The activity rate of women with higher education is slightly higher than the activity rate of men with the same level of education (72,3% and 71,0%, respectively), while the activity

rate of women without school and lower education is 31.5% and lower than the activity rate men of the same educational level by as much as 30,2 percentage points. The inactivity rate of women is 15,6 percentage points higher than the inactivity rate of men (52,9% and 37,3% respectively). The largest gender gap in terms of inactivity in the labor market was recorded in the age category of 55 years and older, where the inactivity rate of women is 78,4%, in contrast to the inactivity rate of men, which is lower and amounts to 61,6% (Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2020a, p.70)

Horizontal and vertical segregation of the labor market by gender are considered one of the main sources of gender inequalities (Aisenbrey & Bruckner, 2008). According to the findings of a survey on the position of women in the business sector (Babovic, 2016, p. 25), women held 25,8% of the highest management positions in active companies, which is a slight increase in the share from 22,0% in 2011. These findings support the thesis that women find it harder to "break through" to leading positions when the competition with men is greater, i.e. when there are more owners and candidates for these positions. The author further notices significant differences in women's and men's entrepreneurship in terms of the sector of activity. This data is not surprising given the relatively pronounced segregation in the labor market, which indicates the professional and sectoral preferences of women and men (Babovic, 2016, p. 26). Gender differences in the sector of activity are more pronounced among women and men who are registered as entrepreneurs than among those who perform entrepreneurial roles at the head of companies. Sectoral segregation is manifested in entrepreneurship, with women being more inclined to trade and the services sector, while men (with a dominant focus on trade) are more inclined than women to do business in the transport and construction sectors. Higher participation of women's business in the field of IT, finance and real estate is a consequence of the high participation of accounting and bookkeeping services that are traditionally "women's" domains, not new forms of knowledge economy (IT, technological innovation and financial markets).

Gender inequalities in Serbia are also visible in the field of wages, because women have lower incomes than men, and certain groups of women are exposed to higher risks of poverty. The pay gap between women and men for 2018 was 8,8% (Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2020a, p. 90), which means that women were paid 8.8% less than men. This data ranks Serbia among the countries with the lowest pay gap in Europe. However, if earnings are viewed by level of education or occupation, the pay gap between women and men is significantly larger than the average pay gap, most often in favor of men. The share of low-wage women in the total number of women (18,0%) is higher than the share of low-wage men in the total number of men (17,8%). Compared to Serbia and the EU-27, "the biggest gap between is in the area of money, mostly due to the large gap in the sub-domain of financial resources (Serbia records a value lower by 27.8 points), i.e. differences in wages and average equivalent net income, although not small gap in relation to the subdomain of the economic situation (the value for Serbia is lower by 13.3 points)" (Babovic & Petrovic, 2021, p. 30). The data further indicate that „compared to the EU-27 member states, Great Britain and countries in the region, Serbia ranks very low, 31st, positioned between Montenegro and Albania. Compared to the first-ranked Luxembourg, Serbia has an index in the field of money lower by as much as 30,3 points“ (Babovic & Petrovic, 2021, p. 30).

4. Methodology

Following Clark's (1997) original study and additional research on the topic, we expect women in general to be more satisfied with job compared to man. We believe that this should also apply to the case of Serbia, due to the unfavorable position that women occupy in the labor market. As noted, lower expectations among employed women have often been posits as a possible cause for gender disparity in job satisfaction. This „expectation gap“ may be the result of cultural norms that limit women's participation in the labor force, but also gender-segregated occupational structures in Serbia. Also, in accordance with Clark's (1997) conclusions, we examined „gender differences in job satisfaction for younger and highly educated workers“ (Perugini & Vladislavljivic, 2019, p.130), assuming that they have higher expectations from job than other women.

In accordance with the goal, a research was conducted among employees in six privately owned IT and publishing companies and one state-owned company (The Pension and Disability Insurance Fund of the Republic of Serbia). A structured questionnaire was used and distributed during January 2021 to 500 addresses (via e-mail). The survey completion rate is 93,6%. The questionnaire has two parts. The first part contained demographic issues related to gender, education, age structure, sectoral structure of the company in which they are employed, management positions and the number of years of work experience.

The second part of the questionnaire contained 8 closed-ended questions in accordance with the Job Satisfaction Questionnaire (Clark, 1997), which measured the degree of satisfaction with several aspects of job, including general satisfaction with current job. Respondents were asked to evaluate their levels of satisfaction with seven dimensions of their job: prospects of promotion, total salary, relationship with supervisors, job security, self-initiative in work, the actual work itself and working hours. The task of the respondents is to assess on a five-point Likert-type scale the extent to which they agree with the stated statements (from 1 = not satisfied at all to 5 = completely satisfied). Finally, individuals were asked "How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your present job overall using the same 1-5 scale?"

The survey was conducted on a sample of 468 employees, of which the number of women respondents was 342 (73,1%) and man 126 (26,9%). Much greater involvement of women in the survey could be explained by the nature of the activities of the companies from which the respondents come, taking into account that more than 40,000 employed women compared to men work in state-owned enterprises in Serbia (Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2020a), as well as that 80% of respondents are employed in the same sector. Second, it is more likely that women were more willing to complete the survey than men. The average age of the respondents is 45 years with an average the number of years of work experience of 14. Only 9% of respondents are in management positions, while slightly less than half (46,3%) have higher education.

Data were analyzed using factor analysis. All analyzes in the research were performed using the software package SPSS for Windows, version 21.

5. Results

Previous research indicates that women are not less satisfied with their jobs than men or are even more satisfied regardless a more inferior position in the labor market. The average scores of job satisfaction and satisfaction with different aspects of the job are reported separately for women and men in Table 1. The results of multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) show the meanvalue of job satisfaction is only slightly higher for men (3,94) than for women (3,92). Hence, in contrast to previous research our data indicate that women are less satisfied with their jobs than men, even though the difference in job satisfaction between women and men is statistically insignificant ($\text{sig.}=0,738$). The results are not in line with the findings of a study that found empirical evidence to support the job satisfaction paradox in many Eastern European countries, including Serbia (Pita & Torregrosa, 2021). The obtained results also do not confirm the hypothesis that the expectations of women who grew up in environments with higher gender equality are more in line with the expectations of their male colleagues (Perugini & Vladislavjevic, 2019). The findings of this study confirm this conclusion authors (Green et al., 2018) that the job satisfaction gap has largely vanished over the last two decades. This reflects a powerful decrement in job satisfaction among women, which is not the product of deteriorating job characteristics for women, but of their increasingly depth analysis of job characteristics.

The results of the analysis also show that men are more satisfied than women in all aspects of the job. However, statistically significant differences were found exclusively in job security ($\text{sig.}=0,000$) and working hours ($\text{sig.}=0,000$). Unlike men, women are more dissatisfied with job security and working hours. The results are not consistent with the findings of some scientists who do not detect any significant gender differences in job insecurity (cognitive or affective) when controlling labor market characteristics (Mau et al., 2012; Hipp, 2016; Gallie et al., 2017).

Table 1: Gender differences in overall job satisfaction and satisfaction with different aspects of the job

	Mean Women	Std. Deviation	Mean Men	Std. Deviation	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Prospects of promotion	3.80	0.455	3.95	0.768	0.009	0.014
Total salary	3.40	0.864	3.63	0.900	0.011	0.014
Relations with supervisors	3.33	1.004	3.60	0.849	0.008	0.015
Job security	3.30	1.049	3.70	0.751	0.000	0.032
Initiative	3.36	0.877	3.57	0.942	0.022	0.011
Actual work itself	3.59	0.844	3.78	0.809	0.032	0.010
Hours	2.95	0.976	3.37	0.968	0.000	0.035
Overall job satisfaction	3.92	0.513	3.94	0.562	0.738	0.000

Further factor analysis found that respondents' answer depended on the sector in which they were employed. The results contained in Table 2 show that women and men in the private sector are more dissatisfied with job security and the difference is statistically significant (gender-sector sig.=0,046). Also, the results show that women from the private sector ($M=3,07$, $SD=0,851$), unlike their male colleagues ($M=3,22$, $SD=0,671$) are more dissatisfied with job security. An explanation for the results can be found in the fact that private sector employees are mostly employed on a fixed-term contract. There is clear evidence that employees experience a higher level of affective job insecurity if they work on fixed-term contracts (Kirves et al., 2011; Keim et al., 2014). According to the theory of socio-psychological stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), employees with fixed-term contracts unlike permanent employees, have a feeling of uncertainty about the future of their employment, because they cannot be sure whether their employment contract will be extended or will have to find a new job. Predicting job losses and financial resources arising from fixed-term contracts can cause stress and dissatisfaction among employees. These findings are in line with study (Morgenroth et al., 2021) which concludes that fixed-term employment encourages affective job uncertainty, with female fixed-term employees being more dissatisfied with job than men.

Table 2: Gender- sector differences in job security satisfaction

Gender	Sector	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
women	public	3.43	1.086		
	private	3.07	0.851		
men	public	3.79	0.777		
	private	3.22	0.671		
Gender * Sector				0.046	0.007

Similar to that, the results contained in Table 3 show that women and men in the private sector are more dissatisfied with working hours and the difference is statistically significant (gender-sector sig.=0,031). Also, the results show that women from the private sector ($M=2,89$, $SD=0,798$), unlike their male colleagues ($M=3,24$, $SD=0,932$), are more dissatisfied with working hours. The explanation for the results can be found in the fact that employees in the private sector probably work beyond the normal eight hours. Therefore, dissatisfaction with working hours can be understood as dissatisfaction with work-life balance, i.e. employees do not have a good opportunity to combine work and private life and enough time for free activities.

The explanation is in line with the research conducted in January 2022 on the effect of the glass ceiling for women in business (67% of respondents are employed in the private sector) shows, among other things, that 59% of women do not go home at the same time almost every day, 50% of them think that they cannot balance their family and business obligations, responsibilities and privileges, while 87% of women point out that they are more likely to face negative consequences for their professional lives due to the inability to harmonize work and private life.

Table 3: Gender – sector differences in hours satisfaction

Gender	Sector	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
women	public	3.20	1.003		
	private	2.89	0.798		
men	public	3.43	0.985		
	private	3.24	0.932		
Gender * Sector				0.031	0.010

In accordance with Clark's (1997) conclusions, in the continuation of the paper we examined „gender differences in job satisfaction for younger and highly educated employees“ (Perugini & Vladislavljjevic, 2019, p.130). The results of the two-factor analysis of variance of gender – age differences in overall satisfaction are presented in Table 4. The results show that there are differences between the three age groups, i.e. that the answers of the youngest respondents differ significantly from the answers of respondents aged 30-40 (difference=-0,32) and older than 45 (difference=-0,33). Gender differences in the group of the youngest respondents show that women are on average more dissatisfied ($M=3,58$, $SD=0,504$) than men ($M=4,00$, $SD=0,000$). Also, the youngest employed women (at the beginning of their professional career) are on average more job dissatisfied compared to their older female colleagues. One possible explanation for the results obtained is the adjustment of women's expectations during their careers. When we analyze job satisfaction on a sample of male and female employees under the age of 29 (starting their professional careers), we see that their levels of expectations are very similar. However, over the course of their careers, women's expectations are reduced due to facing shortcomings in the labor market. This would explain lower job satisfaction among women compared to men at the beginning of their careers, while satisfaction with similar jobs increases along with career advancement.

Table 4: Gender - age differences in job satisfaction

(I) Age	Mean Women	Std. Deviation	Mean Men	Std. Deviation	(J) Age	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
29 and younger	3.58	0.504	4.00	0.000	30 to 45	-0.32 [*]	0.106	0.007
					45 and older	-0.33 [*]	0.114	0.011
30 to 45	3.95	0.542	3.91	0.517	29 and younger"	0.32 [*]	0.106	0.007
					45 and older"	-0.01	0.057	0.995
45 and older	3.92	0.361	4.00	0.676	29 and younger	0.33 [*]	0.114	0.011
					30 to 45"	0.01	0.057	0.995

The results of the two-factor analysis of variance of gender – education differences in overall satisfaction are presented in Table 5. The results show that there are not significant differences between the three education groups. This result is in line with Clark's (1997), Perugini and Vladislavjevic, (2019) finding that „gender differences in job satisfaction are not significant for highly educated employees“ (Perugini & Vladislavjevic, 2019, p.130). „Women in these groups have higher expectations from work than other women, because they had different role models in early childhood or were exposed to good jobs during their work-life (Perugini & Vladislavjevic, 2019, p.130).

Table 5: Gender - education differences in job satisfaction

(I) Education	Mean Women	Std. Deviation	Mean Men	Std. Deviation	(J) Education	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Secondary education	3.91	0.361	3.88	0.957	College education	0.00	0.076	1.000
					Higher education	-0.04	0.053	0.743
College education	3.88	0.334	4.00	0.000	Secondary education	0.00	0.076	1.000
					Higher education	-0.04	0.075	0.871
Higher education	3.95	0.720	3.94	0.525	Secondary education	0.04	0.053	0.743
					College education	0.04	0.075	0.871

6. Discussion

The primary goal of this paper was to examine the paradox of gender job satisfaction among employees in Serbia. The starting point was the assumption that employed women are on average more satisfied than men, despite the inferior position they occupy in the labor market. In the literature, the reasons for women's greater satisfaction are mainly attributed to lower job expectations compared to men (Clark, 1997; Perugini & Vladislavjevic, 2019).

However, the results of our research show the mean value of job satisfaction is only slightly higher for men than for women. Hence, data indicate that women are less satisfied with their jobs than men, even though the difference in job satisfaction between women and men is statistically insignificant. At first glance, our conclusion that women are on average more dissatisfied with their job than men is not consistent with a number of studies emphasizing greater job satisfaction among women rather than men (Clark, 1997; Perugini & Vladislavjevic, 2019; Sloane & Williams, 2000; Sousa-Poza & Sousa-Poza, 2003). Accordingly, the idea of the gender-job satisfaction paradox in conditions of high levels of gender inequality that characterizes the labor market in Serbia cannot be confirmed and accepted as a universal phenomenon. Similarities in job satisfaction between male and female employees show less and less relevance of gender differences in job satisfaction. The findings are fully consistent with studies indicating gender neutrality in job satisfaction (Westover, 2012; Kifle & Hailemariam, 2012; Andrade et al., 2019).

Another important finding in this study was that men and women do not seem to be equally affected by job security and working hours. Differences in the effects of these aspects of job between women and men cannot be explained by gender differences in the labour market position, but the economic sector in which they are employed. A possible explanation for the fact that women working in the private sector are on average more dissatisfied with these aspects of work stems from the fear of job loss and loss of financial

resources, as well as the need to work-life balance. Unlike men, women in Serbia still carry a greater burden when it comes to caring for children and other family members, and it is simply impossible to fully reconcile them with professional obligations.

The final area we examined included „gender differences in job satisfaction for younger and highly educated employees“ (Perugini & Vladislavljevic, 2019, p.130). Unlike Clark (1997), who believed that „gender differences in job satisfaction are not significant for highly educated employees“ (Perugini & Vladislavljevic, 2019, p.130), we found that youngest women (probably at the beginning of professional career) are on average more dissatisfied than men and older women, because high expectation levels are decrease over the course of their career in response to facing disadvantage on the labour market. On the other hand, the results of our research confirm the absence of gender differences in job satisfaction for highly educated employees (Clark, 1997; Perugini & Vladislavljevic, 2019).

Limitations in the research come from several sources. First of all, the sample is insufficiently representative, bearing in mind that twice as many women as men participated in it. Also, the type of activity, size and ownership structure of the company prevents the generalization of results. The survey lacks respondents from other public companies, privatized state-owned companies and multinational companies operating in Serbia, as well as companies in other types of activities, especially manufacturing.

Second, given that all data were collected from the same sources in the same time period through the respondents' self-assessment, there is a possibility of a bias effect. Respondents may distort the results by trying to maintain consistency in their answers or to present themselves in the best light regardless of their true feelings. Job satisfaction is an extremely subjective question, which is why people's feelings can often change.

Conclusion

Despite gender neutrality in job satisfaction, the results of the work showed that women employed in the private sector compared to their male colleagues are more dissatisfied with certain aspects of work, primarily job security. In accordance with the above, there is a need to analyze the conditions for the application of the concept of flexicurity in the Serbian labor market. The main idea behind flexicurity is to achieve a shift from job security (same job throughout the working life) to employment security, that is, having lifelong employment possibilities (Employment Committee, 2007).

Whether a "temporary but secure job" will be more attractive than a combination of "permanent but unsafe work", or whether the length of the employment contract will be less important if the fear of losing a job is overcome, requires a different approach to employment policy through a more active employer role. At the micro level, flexicurity has been shown to be a very important determinant of employee satisfaction (Origo & Pagani, 2009), bearing in mind that greater flexibility in employment can contribute to increased job satisfaction only if it does not create negative effects on business security perceptions. Accordingly, employers can reduce the effects of fixed-term employment contracts on job satisfaction only if the employee is provided with continuity of employment that can, due to the absence of permanent contracts, maintain adequate working conditions that include more opportunities for education, improvement and good internal interpersonal relations.

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/// About the Authors

Miloš Dašić, PhD

Toplica Academy of Applied Studies, Department of Business Studies Blace,
Kralja Petra I Street, No. 1, 18420 Blace, Serbia
dasicmil@yahoo.com



Miloš Dašić, PhD, completed graduate studies in management (Doctor of Science) in Belgrade. So far, he has published more than 30 scientific articles in prestigious domestic and international journals and two books used as a textbook at Business School. He is the founder and director of two companies, president of Vozdovac Business Club, and a member of several local and state-wide organizations with an economic development portfolio. He speaks English fluently (C1) and French (B1). He is married and has two children.

Nenad Mihajlov

Toplica Academy of Applied Studies, Department of Business Studies Blace,
Kralja Petra I Street, No. 1, 18420 Blace, Serbia
nenadmihajlov@hotmail.com



Nenad Mihajlov is a lecture at the Toplica Academy of Applied Studies, Department of Business Studies Blace. His research interest focus on organizational behaviour and human resource management. Nenad is the author more than 30 academic papers.

Snežana Mihajlov, PhD

Toplica Academy of Applied Studies, Department of Business Studies Blace,
Kralja Petra I Street, No. 1, 18420 Blace, Serbia
snezanamihajlov@hotmail.rs



Snežana Mihajlov, PhD, completed graduate studies in management (Master's and Doctor of Science) in Belgrade. He is currently the head of the Department of Business Studies Blace at the Toplica Academy of Applied Studies and a professor of management at the same Department. Her main academic interests are organizational behavior, human resource management and business communications. Snežana is the author of textbook, more than 30 academic papers and a participant in international and national projects.