A GENDER-SENSITIVE STUDY OF LABOUR INTEGRATION IN A SAMPLE OF AN OFFICIAL MASTER’S DEGREE GRADUATES

Adriana Selaya1, María José Vázquez2, Francisca Fariña2

1Unidad de Psicología Forense. Universidad de Santiago de Compostela (SPAIN)  
2Departamento AIPSE. Universidad de Vigo. Grupo de Innovación Docente en Psicología Jurídica y Forense (INDOPSIFORENSE) (SPAIN)

Abstract

Introduction: recently, universities had incorporated several consultation procedures to evaluate and improve the quality of higher education. Studies involving graduates have become more important, as a useful tool to orient and adjust the formative process to the labour market. However, more gender-sensitive studies about the graduates’ labour integration are needed to know the reality of the gender equal opportunities in labour market. In this line, gender-sensitive research helps to create better social and working conditions which allow an optimal professional development for women and men. With that aim, the Tutoring Plan of the “Máster Oficial en Psicología del Trabajo y las Organizaciones, Jurídico-Forense y de Intervención Social” from the University of Santiago (Spain) was directed to analyse the labour integration process of the master’s degree with a gender-sensitive perspective. For this, perceived labour equality conditions, family (caring of children and dependent persons) and domestic burdens (domestic work), as well as job quality (salary, working hours and job stability), were evaluated in both genders.

Method: an ad hoc questionnaire was created to evaluate the first job quality, current job quality and perceived labour inclusion barriers. With the participants’ responses (N=99, mean age of 27.29 years, and 80.8% women), a database was created, and descriptive analysis were performed.

Results: the results showed that, although, as a whole, the participants do not report the perception of family burdens, when data were analysed by gender, women reported significantly more the perception of these barriers. Attending to domestic burdens, they have a major relevance for participants than family ones, and again, gender analysis shows that 80% of these responses are given by women. Regarding to equality perception, the great majority of participants declare that females have more troubles in getting a job than males. Regarding to job quality, the results exhibited a tendency in both first and current job: it belongs to the public sector, they’re employees, have a half-day job (for the first job) or a full-time job (for the current job) and a net salary around 1000€. Additionally, when the existence of possible gender-based differences is analysed, it is observed that there is a salary gap: the results about current job showed that although the sample is mainly comprised by women, males report a higher mean salary. In that way, it is also observed that more men are receiving the average salary, while 21% of women are perceiving less than 500€ per month.

Conclusions: the results obtained reveal a reality in which family and domestic burdens are still perceived to a greater extent by women, leading them to a major exposition to personal and family stress. In addition to that, employment quality analysis shows that more precarity exists among women i.e., more possibilities of getting lower salaries than men for the same work. Finally, it is worthwhile to highlight the importance of including a gender perspective on this kind of studies, not only to evaluate the academic interest and the master’s update, but as a way of giving visibility to socioeconomic necessities and, among them, especially, the gender (in)equity.

Keywords: gender, labour integration, graduate’s evaluation, cultural barriers, psychology.

1 INTRODUCTION

The Teaching Innovation Group (INDOPSIFORENSE) was created in 2011 with the aim of developing on its field several training, innovation and improvement activities for university teaching. In addition, the group has been accredited and recognised by the University of Santiago de Compostela [1].

In that way, one of the first actions of this group was the inclusion of a gender-sensitive perspective on the Tutoring Plan (TP) of the “Master de Psicología del Trabajo y las Organizaciones, Jurídico-Forense y de la Intervención Social” (MPTOJFIS) as a main objective. This objective is developed especially with two actions: to identify student’s needs and to plan them, as well as to analyse their
labour integration process, both of them with a gender-sensitive perspective [2]. To do that, studies about perceived necessities by gender on coursing this master are carried out, showing that women perceive more family and domestic burdens without the person choosing a part-time enrolment [2]. From the TP, adaptations and steps are carried out, as well as having schedule flexibility to, as far as possible, improve the academic performance of those students who have more difficulties or who access to the degree with greater inequality options.

It is worthwhile then to highlight the importance of Gender Equality Laws, which take women’s difficulties and necessities into account and establish the measures that have to be developed. In this sense, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women Adopted by the UN General Assembly in December 1979 and ratified by Spain in 1983 is included. However, every day can be ascertained how this legal equality is not materialised. It has been assessed [3] how despite the affirmation of a real necessity of gender equal rights and obligations, regarding to family and working aspects gender differences still exist. It shows, then, an internal discrepancy amid the actual and ideal assumption of gender equality. In this study, it has been assessed how child care responsibility and emotional support still correspond to mothers.

It has to be said then that perceptions, assumptions and acceptance of gender roles have been concluded as events or conditions that hinder the professional developing process, and thus defining what professional barriers are [4]. In this manner, the main labour barriers perceived by women are, among others, maternity, family life conciliation and self-perception as less valuable than men. These barriers are common among the majority of women, independently of their academic, social or economic status [4; 5; 6]. In line with that, the European Commission acquired a strategic engagement for equality between women and men and prioritised five key areas for action: a) equal economic independence for women and men; b) equal pay for work of equal value; c) equality in decision-making; d) dignity, integrity and ending gender-based violence; and e) promoting gender equality beyond the European Union [7].

From a gender-sensitive perspective [8] it is necessary to analyse these potential inequalities in the MPTOJFIS’ graduates who integrate into the labour market and to know exactly which of these barriers are affecting women in Legal and Forensic Psychology; this field is defined as the professional and research area of Psychology whose object of study is the behaviour of people within a legal process [9], and it can be presumed that in a professional field as it is, could also exist this kind of working barriers for women.

1.1 Objectives

To know the employability and working conditions of MPTOJFIS graduates with a gender-sensitive perspective. To evaluate potential barriers, both labour integration and conciliation ones, comparing males and females in order to ensure if in Legal and Forensic Psychology field occurs as in other professional fields or if, by contrast, exist a greater gender equality.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Procedure

First, students were informed about this project and that it would be necessary -and voluntary- to sign an informant consent which allows to contact them after finishing the degree.

An ad hoc questionnaire was created to evaluate different variables organized by 9 blocks: socio-demographic, academic data, satisfaction with the degree, adequation of the competences to the labor market, job search, training after de degree, perceived labor inclusion barriers, current job and first job after the degree. In that way, the questionnaire has a total of 107 items. To the current research, the ones related to perceived labor integration barriers and first and current job conditions were included.

With the questionnaire created, participants were contacted online, and they received it via Google. Once the responses were received, a database was created to cluster them into the main blocks of variables. Next the data were descriptively analyzed.
2.2 Participants

Ninety-nine graduates were contacted. Participants had graduated in years 2010-2011, 2011-2012, 2012-2013 and 2013-2014. The 80.8% were women and the mean age of the sample was 27.29 years (SD=3.26; range 23-41 years).

The 63.3% (n=62) of the sample accessed to the master’s degree with a Psychology Degree (old plan), followed by the 35.7% (n=35) from the new plan.

Regarding the admission marks, the mean was 7.37/10 (range 6.11-9.28). The mean mark obtained in the master’s degree was 8.5/10 (range 6.70-9.77).

2.3 Data analysis

A database was created and analyzed with statistical program IBM SPSS Statistics 23.0 for Windows.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Perceived working barriers

Regarding to family burdens, the 56.5% of the sample affirm that they don’t have them, followed by the 16.2% that has “little” burdens and the 11.1% which say “some”. By contrast, the 6.1% and the 10.1% affirm they have “sufficient” and “abundant”, respectively.

Referring to domestic burdens, the 25.3% don’t perceive them, followed by the 13.1% that has “little” burdens and the 13.1% which say “some”. On the other hand, the 22.2% and the 26.3% perceive “sufficient” and “abundant” domestic burdens respectively.

In terms of perceived equal labour integration opportunities among men and women, an 80.8% (n=80) uphold that both groups have different opportunities. Of those, a 13.1% affirm that there is no equality at all. In contrast, a 19.2% (n=19) say that the opportunities are, in general, for both genders the same.

The percentages about the general perception that participants have about the inequality of professional opportunities for women and the individual perception of domestic and family burdens, both differentiated by gender, are shown in Figure 1. It can be proved how despite the general consensus about women’s difficulties on working integration, once they have entered the labour market, have indeed more external burdens and responsibilities than men.

![Figure 1. Percentages of Perceived professional barriers by gender.](image-url)
3.2 First job's quality (after the master's degree)

Regarding to the sector it belongs, the 28.3% \((n=18)\) said that they worked in public sector, the 6.4% \((n=3)\) indicated their employ was concerted and the majority, the 55.3% said they worked in private sector \((N=47)\).

Referred to the relation the job had with the master's degree, the 51.1% \((n=24)\) indicated that the job was related to the degree, in contrast of the 48.9% \((n=23)\) who said it wasn’t. Of those who said that it was related to the degree, the 80% \((n=20)\) indicated that it had to be with legal and forensic area, while the other 20% \((n=4)\) said that it was to the social intervention one. \((N=47)\).

In terms of employment regime, the 80.4% \((n=37)\) said they were employees, while the 17.4% \((n=8)\) said they had a self-employment. One participant indicated “other” \((2.2\%)\) \((N=46)\).

The working time was mostly a half-time job, indicated by the 59.6% \((n=28)\) of the participants in contrast to the 38.3% \((n=18)\) that indicated full-time and one participant \((2.1\%)\) who indicated “other” \((N=47)\).

As it is shown in Figure 2., and attending to working time conditions by gender, it is observed that those who have a half-time contract are mostly women, while when it is a full-time one, the percentage of men increases considerably.

![Figure 2. Percentages of Working hours by gender in first job](image)

With regard to the duration of the job, the 19.1% \((n=9)\) indicated “less than a month”, the 25.5% \((n=12)\) said 1 to 3 months, the 21.3% \((n=10)\) worked from 3 to 6 months, while the 12.8% \((n=6)\) and the 21.3% \((n=10)\) indicated 6 to 12 months and more than 12 months respectively. Differentiating by gender, not a single male worked less than a month, while 9 women did \((N=47)\).

Regarding to salary, the 6.4% \((n=3)\) indicated that they hadn't a salary, the 34% \((n=16)\) said that it was less than 500€, the 25.5% \((n=12)\) specified that it was between 500 and 1000€, while the 12.8% \((n=6)\) perceived a salary between 1000 and 1500€, the 17% \((n=8)\) between 1500 to 2000€ and the 4.3% \((n=2)\) indicated that they earned over 2000€ \((N=47)\).

Meanwhile, if salary is analysed by gender, results (see Figure 3) reveal that there is some equality amid male and female salaries, despite conditions are very precarious for all, as the majority received less than 500€ per month, this is more accused for women. It is also shown how the male percentage increases when higher salaries are earned.

3.3 Current job/practices’ quality

Regarding to the sector it belongs, the majority, the 51.7% \((n=31)\) said that they worked in public sector, the 10% \((n=6)\) indicated their employ was concerted and the 38.3% \((n=23)\) said they worked in private sector \((N=60)\).

Referred to the relation the job had with the master’s degree, the 73.3% \((n=44)\) indicated that the job was related to the degree, in contrast of the 26.7% \((n=16)\) who said it wasn’t. as happened with the
first job, of those who said that it was related to the degree, the 80% \((n=28)\) indicated that it had to be with legal and forensic area.

In terms of employment regime, the 75% \((n=45)\) said they were employees, while the 15% \((n=9)\) said they had a self-employment and the 10% \((n=6)\) that indicated “other” \((N=60)\).

In this occasion, the working time was mostly full-time, indicated by the 63.3% \((n=38)\) of the participants in contrast to the 25% \((n=15)\) that indicated half-time and seven participants \((11.7\%)\) who indicated “other” \((N=60)\).

![Figure 3. Percentages of Salaries by gender in first job](image)

As it is shown in Figure 4, general conditions by gender of the first job hasn’t changed a lot, but full-time jobs have increased for men, while women still have, in a larger extent, half-time contracts.

![Figure 4. Percentages of Working hours by gender in current job](image)

With regard to the duration of the job, nobody indicated “less than a month”, the 7.1% \((n=4)\) said 1 to 3 months, the 12.5% \((n=5)\) worked from 3 to 6 months, while the 35.7% \((n=20)\) and the 44.7% \((n=25)\) indicated 6 to 12 months and more than 12 months respectively \((N=54)\).

Regarding to salary, the 1.6% \((n=1)\) indicated that they hadn’t a salary, the 16.7% \((n=10)\) said that it was less than 500€, the 33.3% \((n=20)\) specified that it was between 500€ and 1000€, while the 35% \((n=21)\) perceived a salary between 1000 and 1500€, the 6.7% \((n=4)\) between 1500 to 2000€ and the 6.7% \((n=4)\) indicated that they earned over 2000€ \((N=60)\).
Results shown in Figure 5 correspond to percentages about participants responses about how much they earn in their current job differentiated by gender. It demonstrates how, despite the sample is mostly feminine, men perceive higher salaries to a larger extent while only women can be found in no remunerated or bad-remunerated categories.

![Figure 5. Percentages of Salaries by gender in current job](image)

4 CONCLUSIONS

The aims of this study were to know labour conditions of MPTOJFIS graduates with a gender-sensitive perspective and also to assess potential labour differences regarding to perception of barriers, attending to the gender of the participants.

A. General labour conditions: initial precarity with possibilities of future stability

First job conditions, speaking generally, are working for the private sector as employees, half-time job and with a duration of 1 to 3 months, and for that, less than 500€ per month will be earned. Regarding to the current job, most common conditions are working for the public sector as employees, full-time, with a duration of more than 12 months and with a salary around 1000 and 1500€. As it is seen, working conditions for newly graduates are more precarious, but when time passes, they could achieve more stable jobs and with better conditions [4; 5; 6].

B. Labour conditions for women: more precarity and less possibilities of getting better jobs

If working conditions are analysed by gender, some differences can be noticed [4; 5; 6]. The same situation has been assessed in this study. For the first job, conditions are equally precarious for both genders. In contrast, when current job is analysed, it is seen how men have achieved the improvement of working stability to a larger extent than women have, as we only find women in the “bad-labour conditions” categories. This situation brings to light the difficulty that women have to find quality employments. In addition, as happens in other professional fields, we corroborate the existence of a salary gap amongst men and women, as well as a “glass ceiling” which hinder their employment’s conditions improvement. Our results reveal the necessity of keeping driving improvement measures for the labour market, because, despite the number of female workers have increased, the inequality is still present in other areas, as the salary and earnings [7].

C. Perception of barriers: consensus in the female inequality

Both men and women perceive that women have more troubles in getting a job, combined with the fact that they have worseconciliation conditions as they still have to attend to domestic work and family care [6; 10]. Hence, gender roles are still present in our society, and despite women can now access to the labour market, they are still maintaining their work at home, leading them to a major
exposition to stress. Also, is worth to say that and employers should foster labour conciliation conditions, with governments and other companies giving more resources to those who have equality-based politics and working conditions.

D. Tutorial actions with gender-sensitive perspectives developed

The Tutoring Plan with a gender-sensitive perspective constitutes a useful tool for detecting education process and labour integration of graduates’ needs and thus it can be considered in the institutional tutoring plans [11], as it could contribute to the development of one of the principal competences that the new European Higher Education Area attaches to the professionals of the university teaching [12].

E. Professional barriers need to be evaluated and studies with gender-sensitive perspectives developed

This study has been developed with a gender-sensitive perspective. The inclusion of the gender perspective, not only includes a separation among genders, but also the consideration of it as a primary and transversal variable, which allows the development of specific actuation politics [13].

As a general conclusion, the graduates inform about differentiated labour conditions among both genders and thus, it can be said that unfortunately, the initial hypotheses have been confirmed, since women inform about general worse labour conditions. In Psychology, other investigations have revealed how in Spain the number of women graduates overcome men’s: it is overrepresented. This female superiority remains in the initial steps of the scientific career, but the reverse occurs at high level scientific and academic positions [14].

In addition to that, they have to satisfy their work obligations and, when at home, continue with domestic work and family-care responsibilities, leading them to a role overload and to greater levels of unequal distribution of personal burdens.

Limitations

With all, this work is not exempted of limitations. One of them could be that due to the small sample size and the gender-unequal distribution of the groups, only descriptive data could be given. In addition, the sample is mostly feminine and, despite that it gives an image of the reality of the professional profile, a direct generalization of the results can’t be done.

Another potential limitation is the possible methodological problem due to the format of the questionnaire (as it is carried out by Google Forms).

An additional limitation may come from that results may be explained partially by a source of common method bias i.e., part of the variance is attributable to a measurement method by the respondents. Succinctly, respondents may bias their answers in favour to a positive evaluation of the Master by social desirability or by an indirect benefit from a positive evaluation of the master [15].

Finally, a potential limitation is related to that gender labour inequality is part of a general gender inequality derived from a centred male dominant society. Thus, the effects on labour market are mediated by the general gender inequality.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Consolidación y Estructuración de Unidades de Investigación Competitivas en el Sistema Universitario de Galicia (Xunta de Galicia). Grupo PS1 Universidade de Vigo.

REFERENCES


