

ACCESSIBILITY OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS FOR MALES, FEMALES, AND PERSONS WHO BALANCE FAMILY AND OCCUPATIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES WHILE WORKING IN THE UKRAINIAN ENERGY SECTOR

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Abstract. The article is devoted to the approbation of tools for quantitative assessment of the involvement of men, women, and persons who must balance professional and family responsibilities in order to participate in corporate professional training programs in the context of ensuring the stability of the energy industry of Ukraine in war conditions and post-war recovery.

The database was obtained through an online poll taken by employees of enterprises and institutions of the energy sector (the survey population $n = 290$). The indicator of the frequency of participation in corporate professional training in the annual dimension is applied both for all employed women and men and for women and men who are employed at the same qualification level. The evidence obtained shows that to attract women involved in raising children and create truly equal conditions for them, employers need to develop special procedures and forms of participation in training programs, which involve additional costs. We also justified that in a period of post-war recovery, it is possible to maintain the representation of women at key levels of the management hierarchy only if the privileged position of men returning from the war is, to some extent, balanced by the high professional competence of women who expect to retain the positions occupied during the period of men's employment in military operations. Accordingly, the tools we have proposed for assessing and analyzing the intensity of involvement of women and men in corporate professional training programs are becoming increasingly relevant for analytical support of policies aimed at maintaining the representation of women in energy management structures during the post-war recovery period.

Keywords: *gender, equality, corporate training programs, professional mobility, energetic.*

Reikšminiai žodžiai: *lyčių lygybė, įmonių mokymo programos, profesinis mobilumas, energetika.*

Introduction

Gender equality in career opportunities of the Ukrainian energy sector has traditionally been considered in the context of sector development and integration into the European Energy Space (Dyachuk et al. 2019). However, after Russia's full-scale invasion began, energy, like other sectors, faced a radical reduction in the supply of male labor due to mobilization against the backdrop of increased demand, in particular due to large-scale destruction and energy generation and distribution working in overloaded regimes. Accordingly, the ability of energy enterprises to meet their personnel needs based on female labor supply has become no longer a desirable component of development, but a necessary condition for survival. Thus, institutional reforms and efforts aimed at eliminating gender discrimination in the energy sector in the pre-war period have become a significant factor in the stability of energy enterprises in wartime (Poruch 2023). Thus, studies that provide an assessment of the effectiveness of gender equality policies in the Ukrainian energy sector create the necessary basis for explaining the successes and problems of resistance of individual enterprises, energy sectors, and the industry as a whole in the conditions of a full-scale invasion. Accordingly, this article is aimed at solving two tasks. The first is the approbation of methodology for quantitatively assessing gender equality in the area of employee involvement in corporate professional development programs. The second is to clarify the effectiveness of gender equality policies in issues of access to corporate professional development programs in the pre-war years, as an important factor in the sustainability of the Ukrainian energy sector in conditions of critical limitation of the male labor supply.

Literature analysis

The focus on the gender-based involvement characteristics in corporate skill-development programs is delineated within "bonding and selection" models (Lazear 1981; Salop and Salop 1976). This theory, in the context of strategic decisions on investing in human capital, demonstrates that employers will consider women of fertile age less inclined to permanent employment and prefer to hire men for positions that involve highly specialized training. The idea that women of fertile age are more prone to shifts in working life and prefer to invest in universal skills (which retain value in the event of workplace change) rather than in specialized ones (focused on a specific enterprise) can find empirical confirmation in different returns from tenure for women and men. "Lower returns to tenure for women could be due to employer discrimination based on rational expectations about women's attachment to jobs. For example, if employers engage in statistical discrimination, then the perception of women as less stable workers could lead employers to systematically not hire women for jobs with opportunities for specific training or learning." (Munasinghe et al. 2008, 1297)

At the same time, studies based on the data of Ukrainian enterprises mostly ignore both

the general features of the position of women in the organization and the specifics of their access to career growth opportunities. In particular, the connection between the activity of involvement in professional training and risks of their switching to another employer, or even competitor, as was researched by Verba (2011), Pedchenko et al. (2021), Balabanyuk (2011), and Harun (2019). For employers, the staff's professional mobility growth is accompanied by an increase in the cost of professional training, paid by the employee to ensure compliance of employees' competencies with the requirements of the workplace (Laptev 2018; Kuybida and Shpektorenko 2018; Tyshchenko et al. 2022).

However, even in widely cited publications (Blau and Winkler 2017; OECD 2012) quantitative characteristics that can be used to assess the involvement of staff (a certain group, selected by professional qualifications or socio-demographic characteristics) in corporate training programs do not have an unambiguous interpretation, even in the context of a particular strategy of enterprise or society (Handrahan 2004). The opportunity to define the link between characteristics of involvement in corporate training programs and the socio-demographic characteristics of employees should allow for the localizing of both of the reasons that limit the professional mobility of workers and reserves available for Ukrainian society to ensure the stability of the energy industry in the conditions of war and the militarization of the economy, thanks to the improvement of the conditions of female human capital accumulation through corporate training programs (Chiva 2023).

The range of local research devoted to gender aspects of employment in Ukrainian energy notes the high level of standardization of conditions of access to career development programs (Kyrylenko et al. 2024; Tyshchenko et al. 2022; Dyachuk et al. 2019). Such standardization, caused by powerful state regulation that strictly determines the periodicity and forms of conducting professional training and professional development, as well as the requirements for seniority in certain groups of positions and workplaces, has significantly reduced the variability of career trajectories based on the personal characteristics of employees (Tyshchenko et al. 2022).

These factors significantly reduce the explanatory capacity of “female” and “male” functions for investment in “on-the-job training” (Iversen et al. 2020; Cool 2010), as workplace parameters contribute to the features of access to corporate training much more than a person's human capital characteristics. So, the personal characteristics of human capital acquire a new meaning: They show the extent to which employers provide women and men with equal access to corporate vocational training programs and the extent to which involvement in family responsibilities affects women's and men's opportunities to take advantage of opportunities created by employers. The same approach was used in the research devoted to factors of women's career resilience in male-dominated industries (Linnenluecke 2017; Bimrose and Hearne 2012), and similar methods were used for exploring the role of inclusiveness of economic development for improving regional financial capacities (Sakti et al. 2024). And this allows the authors to arm themselves with an additional criterion and additional dimension of gender inequality: If women are less involved by employers in corporate vocational training programs, this can be interpreted as a sign of gender-based

limitations.

Thus, in this article, we test tools that allow us to operationalize the abstract “bonding and selection” model to study gender equality in access to corporate training programs in the Ukrainian energy sector. In particular, the question that is formulated within the “bonding and selection” model is as follows: Why do employers invest less in women’s professional development? (Lazear 1981; Salop and Salop 1976). We also propose consideration of the question: Why are women employed mainly in professional groups that employers involve less intensively in professional training? This context was studied by Tyshchenko et al. (2022). We propose consideration of the issue of different returns on investment in training for women and men (Munasinghe et al. 2008; Pereira and Martins 2004; Psacharopoulos and Patrinos 2004) through an analysis of differences in the frequency of involvement of women and men belonging to the same professional group in corporate professional training. In such analysis, belonging to the same professional group serves as a sign of equal or similar investments in human capital, as was proposed by Tyshchenko et al. (2022). Finally, we propose to use the socio-demographic status of women belonging to the same professional group but with different marital status to quantitatively assess the restrictions imposed on the professional mobility of energy workers by comparing their frequency of involvement in corporate training programs—a task that was formulated but not solved by Kyrylenko et al. (2024).

Accordingly, the contribution of our article in the development of international research, devoted to problems of gender equality in access to factors of professional mobility, is aimed at increasing the visibility of the set of national cases and illustrating the connection between human rights, equality, non-discrimination, and the capacity for sustainable development of organizations and society as a whole. To improve the local research, we propose the development of quantitative assessment tools with indicators of the frequency of involvement in corporate training programs and principles of their application for gender equation analysis.

Methodology

The primary set of information was received through an online poll taken by people involved in the enterprises and institutions of the energy sector (the survey population $n = 290$). The sampling is not representative of the entire population of the energy sector workers, by territorial or industry-specific structure. Within the sampling, the share of the extractive and energy-generating industries workers is lower than their proportion in general among all energy sector workers of Ukraine—the proportion of government regulation workers is significantly higher compared to the general number. However, all of the professional qualifications groups have been represented in the sampling, starting from the unskilled workers (first level qualification group according to the «ISCO-08») up to the top management members of the energy companies (fourth level qualification group

according to the «ISCO-08»). At the same time, the poll procedure conditions provided equal chances to women and men from each professional qualifications group to partake in the survey. This provision allows researchers to use the results to illustrate the general characteristics and tendencies of equal gender access to the corporate skill development programs and involvement of women and men at different levels of the professional qualifications hierarchy.

Among those surveyed, 4.1% were upper management representatives from energy companies and government regulation institutions (heads of companies, departments, and sections—8th level according to the classification used in the research); 21.0% were of representatives of the commercial and technical management (deputies of managers and heads of functioning services within the departments—7th qualification level); 36.6% were highly qualified specialists (leading, head specialists—6th qualification level); 23.8% were qualified technical and commercial specialists (5th qualification level); and 14.5% were technical office workers and physical laborers (skilled and unskilled— 4th and lower qualification levels).

The distribution of the overall number of those surveyed by qualifications level is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Professional and qualitative structure of the sample

Professional qualification group	Women			Men		
	Respondents	% of the number of responders of both genders according to qualification level	% of all women respondents	Respondents	% of the number of responders of both genders according to qualification level	% of all men respondents
Upper management	7	58.3	4.8	5	41.7	3.5
Management	15	24.6	10.2	46	75.4	32.2
Highly trained professionals	66	62.3	44.9	40	37.7	28.0
Trained professionals	41	59.4	27.9	28	40.6	19.6

Technical office labor and physical labor, both skilled and unskilled (qualification level 4 and lower)	18	42.9	12.2	24	57.1	16.8
All	147	50.7		143	49.3	

For evaluating the intensity of involvement in corporate professional training programs, we propose the average frequency of involvement during the period of employment at the enterprise, which is calculated separately for each type of corporate training using the formula:

$$AF = N / Y, \text{ where: } (1)$$

AF – average number of training programs completed during employment at the enterprise, times per year

N – total number of training programs completed by an employee during their time at the company

Y – number of years of work in a company

Results and discussion

During the first stage, we compare the indicators for women and men who are on the same qualification level (Table 2).

The data in the table indicates that, at the time of the poll (the second quarter of 2021), the surveyed women were somewhat less likely to be involved in training while released from work. However, according to aggregated data for all women and men included in the sampling, the obtained differences can be considered statistically significant only with a probability of error of about 20% (differences are significant only at $p=0.2$). Similarly, the differences for each of the professional qualification groups are not statistically significant, which indicates the proximity of involvement intensity for both genders in corporate training programs with release from work.

Table 2. The frequency of involvement in corporate training programs (with release from work)

Professional qualification group	Women			Men		
	Per annum	% of the indicator for all respondents of the corresponding qualification level	% of the same indicator for men	Per annum	% of the indicator for all respondents of the corresponding qualification level	% of the same indicator for women
Upper management	7	58.3	4.8	5	41.7	3.5
Management	15	24.6	10.2	46	75.4	32.2
Highly trained professionals	66	62.3	44.9	40	37.7	28.0
Trained professionals	41	59.4	27.9	28	40.6	19.6
Technical office labor and physical labor, both skilled and unskilled (qualification level 4 and lower)	18	42.9	12.2	24	57.1	16.8
All	0.19	85.9	75.67	0.26	113.55	132.15

The data provided shows that the differences between women and men within each professional qualification level are less significant than the differences between different professional qualification levels. Thus, the leading factor differentiating the frequency of involvement of women and men in corporate training programs is the varying representation of men and women at professional qualification levels. Consequently, the lag in the involvement of women is due to their lower presence at the levels of the hierarchy, which are characterized by more intensive training. Conversely, a higher number of women are employed at levels where the intensity of training is lower than the average for all professional qualification levels.

Next, we will compare the frequency of participation in corporate training programs

of women and men, based on the hypothesis of the importance of family status as a factor differentiating the frequency of involvement in corporate training programs (Table 3).

The given data shows significant differences in the frequency of participation in training programs between women involved and not involved in raising children: about a 12% difference in programs with releasing from work and about 27% in programs without such releasing (differences significant at $p=0.1$). We interpret such differences as evidence that the skill development programs offered to staff (especially in relation to in-service programs) are not fully suitable to the needs of women involved in raising children. At the same time, the level of involvement of women, not only in corporate professional training programs but also in generally filling vacancies, has still not gained sufficient importance among managers of energy enterprises. Until now, the need for certain organizational and technical changes to adapt the production environment to the needs of women is perceived by managers as a reason to focus on male labor supply (Poruch 2023).

Table 3. The frequency of involvement in corporate training programs for women and men with varying family circumstances

Indicator	Women			Men		
	All	Directly involved in raising children	Not involved in raising children	All	Directly involved in raising children	Not involved in raising children
Involved in corporate training programs (with releasing from work) per annum	0.19	0.18	0.20	0.26	0.26	0.25
The percentage of the relevant indicator for the opposite gender	75.67	69.52	80.49	132.15	143.84	124.24
Involved in corporate training programs (when not released from work) per annum	0.41	0.34	0.46	0.45	0.47	0.44
The percentage of the relevant indicator for the opposite gender	91.26	72.19	106.36	109.58	138.53	94.02

A large-scale reduction in the number of the economically active population is a common problem for both the energy and other sectors of economic activity in Ukraine. Such a trend had a significant impact on business models already before the war and has strengthened with the mobilization of human resources (mostly male) for military recruitment.

The severity of this problem for businesses in Ukraine has traditionally been mitigated by the stagnation of national production scales and the possibility of labor replacement by capital. However, the development of the industry, the implementation of projects that aim to expand the scale of production, and the qualitative improvement of the organizational and technical level are extremely difficult under such conditions. A significant part of the surveyed managers of energy enterprises points to the lack of staff with demanded competencies as a critical issue for the energy sector, limiting the choice of business strategies for development and adaptation to new challenges (Poruch 2021; Poruch 2023). At the same time, the presence of large-scale “traditionally male” employment segments at the enterprises is perceived by most managers as a fact of life and not as an opportunity to improve the enterprise’s provision of qualified personnel.

Differences between women and men in involvement in corporate training programs are evident. Additionally, the differences between genders in the group of respondents involved in raising children are significantly greater than for the group of respondents (women and men) who are not involved in raising minors. The indicator of the frequency of participation in training programs with releasing from work for women raising minor children is only 69.5% of the corresponding indicator for men, and for women not involved in raising children, 80.5%.

In the training programs without releasing from work, the rate of women who are involved in raising children equals 72.2% of the corresponding rate for men, while women who are not involved in raising minors participate in such programs more often than men—the rate for women is 106.4% of the indicator for men.

We also noted significant differences observed in terms of the frequency of involvement in training of men and women with different years of work at the enterprise. For the group of women with an employment duration of more than 12 years, the average frequency of involvement in corporate training programs is close to 0.3, compared to 0.19 on average for female respondents. At the same time, for men, the analogous difference is smaller—men with more than 12 years of work experience have a frequency of involvement in corporate training of 0.32 against the average rate for all male respondents of 0.26.

In general, there is a tendency toward “the more experience, the smaller the gap in involvement in corporate training programs for women, compared to men.” This trend is consistent with the thesis about the “leading” and “peripheral” segments of employment, which is widespread in the scientific literature (Lukiyanova 2010; Libanova 2015). At the same time, in the conditions of Ukraine, the main factor in getting into the “leading” segment of employment is the length of service, which is valued by employers more than the investments made in human capital at the early stages of a working career. A widespread explanation for this situation is the predominance of paternalistic principles of wage differentiation in Ukraine and other post-Soviet countries: Loyalty to the employer, which manifests itself through the length of service, affects the salary amount to a greater extent than the scale of investment in human capital (Libanova 2015). In addition, the employer’s propensity to invest in human capital increases with increasing length of service (at least

up to a certain limit), which is also characteristic of social and labor relations in developed countries (Fevre 2003; Pereira and Martins 2004; Psacharopoulos and Patrinos 2004) and can be traced to the system of factors of wage differentiation in post-Soviet countries and Ukraine.

The results of the calculations described above evidence that aggregated indicators of the frequency of participation in skill development programs for women and men are relatively close (differences become statistically significant only at $p=0.2$), and the identified differences are primarily caused by a greater representation of men at those professional qualification levels that are characterized by more intensive participation in training programs. This data proves that the problems of unequal access are not related to the gender status of “women” but to the incomplete adaptation of the formats of training programs to the needs of women who contend with family and work responsibilities.

The presence of the specific needs of women (in our study, women who raise minor children) is emphasized by significant differences in the frequency of participation in skill-development programs of women involved and not involved in raising children. Additionally, the fact that the training programs offered by energy enterprises (especially training without releasing from work) do not fully meet the needs of women who raise minors is supported by the fact that the rate of participation of women lags behind the similar rate for men.

So, there are signs of a typical problem: The principles of access gender equality are implemented better when lower additional costs are associated with compliance. After all, it is easier to attract women to skill-development programs when they are offered the same conditions as men. As a result, the additional burden of raising children, which traditionally rests mainly on women (curiously, men who are involved in raising children participate more actively in professional development programs than men who are not involved in raising children) leads to a lower availability of corporate skill-development programs (according to research results, this is especially evident in relation to on-the-job training) for women who combine family and professional responsibilities.

Conclusions and suggestions

1. To attract women involved in raising children and create truly equal conditions for them, employers need to develop special procedures and forms of participation in skill-development programs, which involve additional costs. It is the additional costs (currently easily measurable) required to achieve real equality in corporate skill-development program access for men and women that traditionally cause gender inequality. After all, the costs of achieving such equality are easily measured and arise already in the current period, while the benefits of achieving gender equality take longer to achieve and require a certain method for substantiating their quantitative assessment.

2. However, the additional costs of attracting women, particularly those who combine

professional and parental responsibilities, to corporate vocational training programs during the war period provide two areas of motivation:

The current problems of the energy sector due to the reduction of male labor supply eliminate the reasons that determined the existence of “predominantly male” professions in the energy sector; in particular, the insufficient qualifications of female applicants, which becomes a condition for survival for energy enterprises.

Due to the features of the post-war period, in particular, the expected return of mobilized male workers to their jobs, it seems as though maintaining the representation of women at key levels of the management hierarchy is only possible if the privileged position of men returning from the war is, to some extent, balanced by the high professional competence of women who expect to retain the positions occupied during the period of men's employment in military operations.

Accordingly, the tools we have proposed for assessing and analyzing the intensity of involvement of women and men in corporate professional training programs are becoming increasingly relevant for analytical support of policies aimed at maintaining the representation of women in energy management structures during the post-war recovery period.

3. Despite the fact that some of the differences found are statistically significant only at $p=0.2$ (a relatively high probability of disproving the hypothesis of the significance of the differences), a simple mechanical sample expansion will allow for sufficiently reliable results and the applying of indicator of frequency of involvement in corporate training programs will lead to well-grounded results in differentiating the conditions for professional growth that women and men, and those who combine employment with parental responsibilities have in the energy sector.

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KARJEROS PLĖTROS PROGRAMŲ PRIEINAMUMAS VYRAMS, MOTERIMS, ASMENIMS KURIE DERINA PROFESINES PAREIGAS UKRAINOS ENERGETIKOS SEKTORIUJE

Anotacija. Straipsnis skirtas moterų ir vyrų, asmenų, profesinių ir šeiminių išpareigojimų vykdymą derinančių su įmonių profesinio mokymo programomis, įtraukimo kiekybinio įvertinimo priemonių aprobacijai, siekiant užtikrinti Ukrainos energetikos pramonės stabilumą karo sąlygomis ir atsigausti po karo.

Duomenų bazė buvo gauta per internetinę apklausą, kurią atliko energetikos sektoriaus įmonių ir įstaigų darbuotojai (apklausos populiacija $n = 290$). Dalyvavimo įmonių profesiniuose mokymuose dažnumo metinėje dimensijoje rodiklis taikomas tiek visoms dirbančioms moterims ir vyrams, tiek moterims ir vyrams, kurie dirba pagal tą patį kvalifikacijos lygį. Gauti įrodymai, kad darbdaviai, norėdami pritraukti vaikus auginančias moteris ir sudaryti joms ištis lygias sąlygas, turi parengti specialias procedūras ir dalyvavimo mokymo programose formas, kurios reikalauja papildomų išlaidų. Taip pat pagrindėme, kad pokario atsigavimo laikotarpiu išlaikyti moterų atstovavimą pagrindiniuose valdymo hierarchijos lygmenyse įmanoma tik tuo atveju, jei iš karo grįžusių vyrų privilegijuotą padėtį tam tikru mastu atsveria aukšta moterų, tikisinių išlaikyti pareigas, užimtas vyrų įdarbinimo karinėse operacijose laikotarpiu, profesinė kompetencija. Atitinkamai, mūsų siūlomos priemonės moterų ir vyrų įsitraukimo į įmonių profesinio mokymo programas intensyvumui įvertinti ir analizuoti tampa vis aktualesnės remiant politiką, kuria siekiama išlaikyti moterų atstovavimą energetikos valdymo struktūrose pokario atsigavimo laikotarpiu.

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