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## GENDER AND CAREER: TRENDS IN DIGITAL SOCIETY

## Abstract

Digitalization of society, including the labour market, noticeably changes women's and men's career expectations and career strategies. Gender philosophy, questions about gender identity, and gender inequality are questions, the answers to which are critical: "the changes in the social status of women and men in our time have fundamentally changed many familiar stereotypes" (Mikhailova, 2011). Kontakt InterSearch Russia conducted a series of studies for Forb's magazine (Kontakt InterSearch Russia, 2021a, b, c; Forbs, 2021) that evaluated the career expectations of respondents; the qualities of managers that female and male managers lack; the presence and causes of gender discrimination; and "stop-factors" of career for men and women. It was found that female executives twice as often as male executives face gender discrimination; women more often than men consider their personal qualities as the reason for career success (men more often than women cite external aspects such as "mentor" and "good timing" among the reasons for career success). At the same time, experts noted that "the boundaries of "female" and "male" qualities are blurring" (Forbs, 2021). In our opinion, this is also due to the influence of digitalization, which is changing the content of many areas of activity.

*Keywords:* gender, gender discrimination, women's career, men's career, digitalization, digital transformation.

## Introduction

The labour market has been changing noticeably lately. There are many reasons for this: changes in technology, political factors, changes in value systems, and much more. These changes also affect the balance of power of the main actors in the labour sphere, including relations between genders.

Problems of gender relations, including gender inequality and gender discrimination in the labour sphere, have been discussed in the scientific literature for quite a long time (Roshchin, 2003; Kalabikhina, 2008; Efimova, 2013; Grisom, Timmer, Nelson, & Blissett, 2021; Agénor, Ozdemir, & Pinto Moreira, 2021; Castagnetti, Rosti, & Töpfer, 2020; Redmond & McGuin-

ness, 2020; Lysenko & Wang, 2020; Islam, Muzi, & Amin, 2019; Castaño, Fontanil, & García-Izquierdo, 2019; Castellano & Rocca, 2018; Sterling & Fernandez, 2018; Pettinicchio & Maroto, 2017; Hedija, 2015).

Nevertheless, in the context of the global digital transformation of society, this problem takes on slightly different content, as the content of some profession's changes and new professions (or lines of work) become less sensitive to gender differences, which leads to a change in career expectations of individuals and, subsequently, the realization of these expectations. This study aims to understand what changes are taking place in the gender relations of labour market actors under the influence of the digital transformation of society.

### Sources of Research

The methods of scientific analysis and synthesis of statistical data, analytical reports, and sociological research are used in work:

1. Kontakt InterSearch Russia executive survey “Women’s and men’s careers - executive survey” (Kontakt InterSearch Russia, 2021a).
2. Kontakt InterSearch Russia research “How women and men in Russia build careers - Kontakt InterSearch Russia” (Kontakt InterSearch Russia, 2021b).
3. Kontakt InterSearch Russia research for Forbs’ magazine “What kind of employees are companies looking for?” (Kontakt InterSearch Russia, 2021c).
4. Forbs magazine research “Women’s and Men’s Careers” (Forbs, 2021).
5. A study of the gap between men and women in basic compensation in state and national data (Grissom et al., 2021).
6. Analyzing the use of a gendered model of overlapping generations with labour market rigour (Agénor, Ozdemir, & Pinto Moreira, 2021).
7. A study of competitive public recruitment impact on male and female earnings using Italian microdata over ten years (Castagnetti, Rosti, & Töpfer, 2020).
8. A study of women’s job satisfaction using data from 28 EU countries (Redmond & McGuinness, 2020).
9. Research on salaries of STEM college graduates in the United States for 2000-2010 (Lysenko & Wang, 2020).
10. A study of the impact of laws (legal gender disparities) that discriminate against women on their participation in the economy using data from over 59,000 firms in 94 countries (Islam, Muzi, & Amin, 2019).
11. The impact of gender stereotypes on decision-making procedures is analysed in psychosocial theories (Castaño, Fontanil, & García-Izquierdo, 2019).
12. Analysis of female and male labour market

conditions and the gender pay gap (Castellano & Rocca, 2018).

13. Exploring the impact of internships on employment and earnings with gender (Sterling & Fernandez, 2018).
14. An analysis of the evidence on the multiplicative effects of gender and disability status on employment and earnings (Pettinicchio, & Maroto, 2017).
15. A study of the impact of managers’ gender characteristics on gender wage inequality (Hedija, 2015).

### The Main Causes of Gender Discrimination in Modern Society

In our everyday life, we are increasingly faced with the levelling of gender differences and the mixing of socio-role expectations of society from the behaviour of men and women. This is manifested in trends in consumer behaviour, marriage and family relations, and, of course, the workplace. However, at the same time, with this trend, which should, in fact, eliminate gender discrimination, the problem of infringement of the rights of women workers remains acute.

In our opinion, we identify the following principal reasons for persisting inequality.

First, it is the inertia of public consciousness, in which the role of women as “keepers of the home” and men as “breadwinners” is still quite vital. According to V. Efimova (2013), “there is a vicious circle: the burden of household duties does not allow women to realize their professional activities, which results in low pay. Furthermore, this, in turn, serves as an argument for their ultimate entrenchment in traditional social roles. Employers (according to L. A. Shatrova, 2003), believe that “women are less focused on professional activities, more focused on family and children, so they are not capable of high-professional activities”. According to studies conducted by foreign scholars (Castaño, Fontanil, & García-Izquierdo, 2019), women continue to lag behind in gaining access to managerial positions because of discrimination at work. One

of the primary roots of such discrimination is gender stereotypes. They influence decision-making procedures because women are perceived as less suitable for leadership positions.

Second, the traditional division of professions into “female” and “male” (justified, in our view, in the pre-industrial and early industrial era, when there was a direct correlation between physical characteristics (such as strength) and labour outcomes but losing its relevance in the late industrial era and especially now in the digital transformation of production).

The third is the phenomenon of ingroup favouritism, whereby members of the ingroup (the group to which one belongs) are favoured over members of the outgroup (the group to which one does not identify oneself). This thesis is confirmed by the results of the Kontakt InterSearch Russia research for Forbs (Kontakt InterSearch Russia, 2021a; Forbs, 2021): according to the female respondents, their predecessor in the current leadership position was a woman in 50% of cases and a man in only 32% (18% of respondents had no predecessors in this position), while for men the situation is reversed: their predecessor in the current leadership position was male 66% of the time and only 15% of the time female (19% of respondents had no predecessors in the position). As we can see, women are more likely to get a job if their predecessor was also a woman, and men are more likely to take the place of men.

Of course, these are not all the existing reasons, and a description of them is the subject of a separate study. Nevertheless, as it seems, even the reasons mentioned earlier allow us to assume that gender discrimination exists and has prospects for further existence.

#### Gender Peculiarities of Career-Building

We conducted a comprehensive analysis of several studies containing information on gender specifics of career building for women and men.

The survey of managers conducted by Kontakt InterSearch Russia (Kontakt InterSearch Russia, 2021a; Forbs, 2021) confirms this: 48% of female respondents admitted that they faced gender discrimination (42% - sometimes, 6% - regularly), while men mentioned such situation only in 25% of cases. However, 25% of discrimination cases against men is also a pretty prominent figure. We are used to the fact that gender discrimination is almost always discrimination against women rather than men, but as we can see, there is also male discrimination, which needs to be examined more closely.

One of the consequences of discrimination is the presence of so-called “stop-factors” of career (factors that prevent further career growth). Executives of different genders highlight different “stop-factors” (Kontakt InterSearch Russia, 2021a; Forbs, 2021):

- male executives are noticeably more likely than female executives (31% vs 21%) to note that “there were no career-impeding factors.”
- the main “stop-factor” career for male executives is “lack of connections” (this alternative is chosen by 46% of men and only 24% of women);
- the main “stop-factor” of a career for female executives is “intrigue in the business environment.” This alternative was chosen by most female respondents - 38%. For men, this factor is second in importance after “lack of connections,” it was noted as significant by 35% of male respondents;
- men and women in different degrees assess the influence of the family on their careers. The family is considered a “stop factor” by 9% of female executives and only 2% of male executives.

Perhaps this tiny percentage of respondents indicated that family is a “stop factor” because 43% of male executives and 59% of female executives admitted that they had to sacrifice family for a career. At the same time, 51% of women and 46% of men feel guilty because they pay little attention to the family, 21% of women and

11% of men said that they faced this feeling before but were able to overcome it, 43% of men said they did not feel guilty, among women the figure is 28%. As noted by Galina Spasenova, “It is very alarming to see that half of the women surveyed feel guilty about the family because of the inability to devote much time to it. Men also have this problem but to a slightly lesser extent. In any case, feelings of guilt are not constructive: a career gives us inspiration, financial stability, and self-actualization - it is important to try to make calm decisions, with an understanding of the well-being you give to your family” (Kontakt InterSearch Russia, 2021a; Forbs, 2021).

Natalia Karpova, CEO of Russian National Reinsurance Company (Kontakt InterSearch Russia, 2021a; Forbs, 2021), comments: “There are very few women in executive positions who do not actually choose between work and family, but skillfully combine them. It is a great art to know how to skillfully combine everyone’s interests without compromising yourself, family, or work. It is something you have to learn”.

#### “Growth Points” in Career Building: Gender Differences

Women are used to counting only on themselves in their careers: 78% named their personal competencies the main reason for career success, and 62% named diligence.

Men also named these factors as key for themselves, but much more often than women talked about external aspects, including the role of mentors (51%) and a lucky set of circumstances (47%). Men also rated the importance of training (53% of men and 38% of women) and non-training (21% and 12%, respectively) higher. Galina Spasenova (Kontakt InterSearch Russia, 2021a; Forbs, 2021) commented on these results: “It is interesting that women consider their competence and diligence to be the key reasons for their success. For men, these are also important factors, but also more weight than for women is given to constant training, network,

external circumstances, and mentors. Men are much stronger regarding self-presentation and PR, while women are less likely to be self-promotional. However, as practice shows, it is crucial to learn how to use this tool”. Confirmation that the tactics chosen by men are successful is the data from a study conducted by Kontakt InterSearch Russia, “Employees sought today and will be sought tomorrow” (Kontakt InterSearch Russia, 2021c). Among the tips on how to stay in demand in the labour market during the crisis, the first place is taken by “constantly learn new things” (94%), the second place is taken by “organize networking, making connections” (60%) and the third by “do self-promotion” (24%). As we can see, these are the competencies that male executives named as key.

Naming the personal competencies that caused career success, both men and women choose similar alternatives. However, there is complete overlap in assessing only a few key competencies: both named “flexibility/adaptability” in the first place (65% of male respondents and 64% of female respondents). The respondents assessed the following competencies almost equally: “leadership/influence” (49% of men and 50% of women); “stress management” (47% of men and 44% of women); and “analyticity” (44% of men and 42% of women).

In assessing the other competencies, the opinions of men and women differ more significantly:

- 52% of women and 44% of men chose the competence “communicativeness”. According to Galina Spasenova (Kontakt InterSearch Russia, 2021a), “women were much more likely to name communicability, which means not only openness but also the ability to smooth over corners, hear the other and willingness to agree”;
- the competence of “strategic thinking” is more important for men than for women (35% of the male respondents vs 26% of the female respondents);
- also, the “innovativeness/creativity” com-

petence is more important for men (30% of the male respondents vs 22% of the female respondents);

- the “toughness” competence is also chosen more often by men (10% of the respondents) than by women (6% of the respondents).

Here are the comments were given by experts-representatives of top management (Kontakt InterSearch Russia, 2021; Forbs, 2021):

- According to Galina Spasenova, partner of Kontakt InterSearch Russia (Kontakt InterSearch Russia, 2021a), “Men emphasize innovation and strategic thinking: they experiment more often, are not afraid to make mistakes, and choose entrepreneurial courage... Men are much more likely to associate the future with entrepreneurship... Women are more cautious on this issue, but sometimes excessive caution only gets in the way”;
- According to Evgenia Tyurikova, Director of Sber Private Banking (Kontakt InterSearch Russia, 2021a), “Women often underestimate themselves and underestimate their abilities. Sometimes you need an outside view to add confidence in yourself, your strengths and talents”;
- According to Elena Bondarchuk, founder of GC “Orientir” (Kontakt InterSearch Russia, 2021a), “The main advantage of women over men is that we have business in the first place. Men spend a lot of time and effort competing, which is their psychology. We, women, do not spend time on this struggle for ambition”;
- According to Juliana Gordon, founder of iWENGO business school (Kontakt InterSearch Russia, 2021a), “The current generation of male executives has a solid masculine component due to the country’s past”.

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- Juliana Gordon, the founder of iWENGO business school (Kontakt InterSearch Russia, 2021a), “The current generation of male executives has a robust masculine component due to the country’s country’s past”.

Women and men in leadership positions are evaluated differently by employers. According to a survey of representatives of 510 companies from different industries (Kontakt InterSearch Russia, 2021b), the skills that women executives and male executives lack are quite noticeably different. Interestingly, respondents evaluated female executives more loyally (a smaller number of respondents noted a lack of any qualities in women than in men). Thus, female executives, according to respondents, lack the following qualities:

- Strategic skills (20%);
- Emotional intelligence (16%);
- Leadership and analytical skills (14% each);
- Teamwork skills (12%);
- Negotiation skills and creative and innovative thinking (10% each);
- Confidence (8%);
- Emotional stability and stress tolerance (6%);
- Ability to make unpopular decisions, toughness (4%).

The respondents assessed male executives a little more strictly. In their opinion, men lack the following qualities: emotional intelligence (53%). As we can see, more than half of the respondents note that such a quality as emotional intelligence is not predominant in male executives (in contrast to female executives, who are denied this quality by 16% of respondents). Nevertheless, soon this quality will become very important. According to Yuliana Gordon, founder of the iWENGO Business School (Kontakt InterSearch Russia, 2021a): “You will need a very high level of emotional intelligence to cope with the digital generation:

- Ability to work in a team (34%);
- Creative and innovative thinking and strategic thinking (10% each);
- Leadership skills (6%);
- Analytical and negotiation skills (4% each).

As we can see, according to respondents, female and male executives have different “points of growth” in career building.

According to research, it is interesting to note

that women are more satisfied with their jobs than men (Redmond & McGuinness, 2020), and this gap persists even when a wide range of personal, professional, and family characteristics persists are considered. However, this gap disappears when work preferences are examined, as women place greater importance on work-life balance.

## Discussion

Gender differences, as seen above, can have a significant impact on the careers of executives. At the same time, the trends of modern digital society are such that these differences will increasingly level out (Kontakt InterSearch Russia, 2021a): “I would say that the boundaries of “female” and “male” qualities are erasing...The situation encourages men to adopt certain elements of the business approach from women and women from men... What matters now is the person himself, his personality, how he is integrated into society” (Alexandra Ventier, managing partner of Dableby Group). Juliana Gordon, the founder of iWENGO business school (Kontakt InterSearch Russia, 2021a), expresses a similar point of view: “I think that in time the borderline between ‘male’ and ‘female’ competencies will be erased. In this case, there may be a demand for a manager who harmoniously combines “female” qualities (such as emotional intelligence and communication skills) and “male” qualities (such as strategic thinking).

## Conclusion

Let us summarize the main results of the analysis:

1. Gender discrimination is faced by a significant part of managers, both female and male. The question remains, to what extent this discrimination is subjective or objective in nature? The answer to this question will allow organizing the work to eliminate discriminatory differences more clearly, and, it seems to us, not in the sphere of legislation or other

formal procedures but in the sphere of communication technologies and practices. It is no secret that a message from the communicator's point of view and a message from the recipient's point of view is not always (if not rarely) identical messages. Therefore, what may be perceived as a discriminatory factor in the communication results of representatives of different sexes is not necessarily so. Consequently, one of the activities to reduce gender discrimination should be considered an improvement of communicative literacy of employees.

2. Gender differences in competencies, the choice of "growth points" for building a career, and the evaluation of career "stop-factors" are pretty noticeable. Furthermore, this is good because diversity is better than unification: the world is too complex, multifaceted, and contradictory to consider and evaluate it only from one side, seeking a single approach. Of course, diversity complicates interaction, often leading to conflict, but it also provides more significant development opportunities, discovery, and, ultimately, greater freedom (as Joseph Renan said: "Inequality lies in nature itself; it is the inevitable consequence of freedom"). Therefore, in our view, effective interaction between genders must be built on a complimentary basis, as mentioned above, "so that men adopt some aspects of the approach to business from women and women from men.

The topic covered in this article is extensive and touches upon a very dynamic area of interpersonal relations. We continue the work we started in cooperation with Kontakt InterSearch Russia to study gender stereotypes within the research "Gender Stereotypes: What Do Top Managers Think? This and subsequent studies will help to answer the questions of when gender differences lead to gender inequality and when they lead to the development and sustainable functioning of the system, and, consequently, what technologies of training and development

of employees in the context of gender philosophy should be applied by modern business.

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