

CHILDLESSNESS AS A HIDDEN REASON FOR UNEQUAL TREATMENT OF EMPLOYEES – PILOT STUDY RESULTS

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Abstract: The contemporary workplace increasingly emphasizes the importance of equality and inclusiveness, yet there are still areas of discrimination that remain poorly understood. One such area is childlessness, rarely analyzed as a potential indicator of unequal treatment. The results of the pilot study show that although childlessness is not formally recognized as a basis for discrimination, it can impact professional perceptions and workplace relationships. The aim of the study was to identify mechanisms that may lead to the marginalization of this group, including manifestations of so-called "family privilege," which involves favoring individuals with children in terms of job assignments, promotions, and access to flexible work arrangements. This article serves as a starting point for a broader reflection on the need to incorporate the perspectives of childless individuals into equality policies and diversity management strategies.


Keywords: childlessness, diversity management, family privileges, HR policies, unequal treatment of employees, workplace discrimination

JEL Classification: A13, A14

Introduction

The contemporary workplace places increasing emphasis on equality and inclusiveness, yet many forms of discrimination remain hidden or insufficiently researched. One such factor may be childlessness, a personal characteristic rarely considered as a potential factor in unequal treatment. Although Polish labor law and EU

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regulations (see Council Directive 2000/78/EC of 27 November 2000, OJ L 2000, 303.16) provide a broad range of protection against discrimination, the list of grounds is not exhaustive, opening the possibility of analyzing less obvious forms of exclusion.

The purpose of this article is to present the results of a pilot study aimed at identifying potential mechanisms of unequal treatment of childless employees in Polish organizations. This article attempts to fill this research gap and invites a broader discussion on the inclusiveness of HR policies in the workplace.

Childlessness as an “invisible” category in the equality policies of the labor market

The issue of equal treatment in employment and occupation is firmly rooted in the legal system at both the national and international levels. In Poland, the fundamental legal act is the Constitution of the Republic of Poland of 2 April 1997, which, in Article 32, guarantees equality before the law for all and prohibits discrimination in political, social, or economic life “for any reason.” Article 33, in turn, specifies the principle of equality between women and men in family, social, political, and professional life (Journal of Laws of 1997, No. 78, item 483; of 2001, No. 28, item 319; of 2006, No. 200, item 1471; of 2009, No. 114, item 946). In labor law, these principles are developed by the provisions of the Labor Code, which guarantee equal treatment and prohibit discrimination on the basis of personal characteristics (Art. 11³ of the Act of 26 June 1974 – Labor Code, consolidated text: Journal of Laws of 2025, item 277, 807).

At the EU level, Directive 2000/78/EC of 27 November 2000, establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation, is of key importance. Its scope includes, among others, protection against discrimination based on sex, age, disability, sexual orientation, belief, and religion. The literature emphasizes that the list of discriminatory grounds is open-ended, allowing Member States to include additional grounds in their interpretation of the law (Chalmers et al., 2019). This means that childlessness could potentially qualify as a ground that requires protection against unequal treatment.

It should be noted that the practice of applying labor law in Poland focuses on protecting parents and those with family responsibilities. This is reflected, among other things, in an extensive system of maternity and paternity leave, parental leave, care allowances, and regulations regarding flexible working hours for parents of children under eight (Suwada, 2021).

Recently, there has been an increasing emphasis on the need to include this category of employees in equality policies, which has not yet been adequately protected. According to the European Commission's recommendations, the principle of equal treatment should encompass both traditionally protected groups and new categories of people at risk of exclusion (European Commission, 2019). In this sense, childlessness, although rarely perceived as a premise of inequality, falls within an area that requires further legal and political reflection.

Traditional narratives regarding the role of family and parenthood are still strongly present in Polish society. Sociological research shows that motherhood and fatherhood are considered a “natural” and desirable stage of adulthood, embedded in the socially constructed model of “normal life.” Childlessness is often interpreted as a deviation from this norm, which translates into the valuation of social and professional roles. In practice, this means that parenthood is associated with maturity, responsibility, and stability, while childlessness may be viewed as a manifestation of selfishness, immaturity, or a lack of full fulfillment (Suwada, 2021).

Childlessness is a multidimensional social phenomenon, the analysis of which requires drawing on various research perspectives: demographic, sociological, psychological, cultural, and economic. The literature emphasizes that childlessness is not a homogeneous category but encompasses a range of diverse situations and experiences (Szukalski, 2004).

Recent analyses confirm the complexity of this phenomenon in the labor market as well. They show that childless workers remain an “invisible” group and are marginalized in organizational policies (Andrews, 2024a; Andrews, 2024b).

The most frequently cited typology distinguishes two basic types of childlessness: voluntary (childfree) and involuntary (childless) (McAllister & Clarke, 1998). Voluntary childlessness is the result of a conscious choice, motivated by lifestyle, personal preferences, values, worldviews, etc. As R. Gillespie notes, individuals declaring a childless life often perceive the decision as part of their identity, rejecting the social coercion of parenthood (Gillespie, 2003). Involuntary childlessness, on the other hand, is associated with independent causes such as health factors, biological limitations, and economic situation that prevent having children (Letherby, 2002).

In the context of professional work, both groups may experience similar social consequences. Childless individuals face various forms of marginalization and stigmatization, although the sources of exclusion vary. Individuals who are childless by choice often face moral judgments such as “selfishness,” “lack of maturity,” or “failure to fulfill social obligations” (Park, 2002). Conversely, childless individuals, contrary to their own plans, may experience pity, sympathy, or even taboo regarding their situation, resulting in a lack of open discussion and isolation in social and professional environments (Stegen et al., 2023). This phenomenon is reflected in the concept of “parenthood norms,” or parenting norms, which in strongly family-oriented societies define the framework of adulthood and responsibility primarily through the prism of having children. Normative expectations of parenthood mean that childlessness in any form is perceived as a deviation from the socially accepted model. As Hakim points out, in the context of the theory of preferences regarding family and professional roles, people who consciously choose a life without children fit into the career-oriented group, which is often depreciated in cultures with a strong dominance of the traditional family model (Hakim, 2002).

Analyzing the functioning of contemporary organizations, a number of mechanisms of indirect discrimination against childless people can be identified:

- employee benefits – in many companies, the benefits system is primarily aimed at families with children, such as subsidies for summer camps and preschools, Christmas gifts for children, etc. As a result, childless individuals do not benefit

from some benefits, even though they formally participate in their financing (Lewis, 1997; Crompton, 2006),

- working time flexibility – organizations more often grant parents privileges such as remote work, early departures, or flexible start times. Childless employees, on the other hand, are required to “compensate” for this flexibility, for example, by working longer hours or taking on the tasks of colleagues (Suwaga, 2021; Kelly et al., 2010),
- task burden – the stereotypical belief that childless individuals “have more time” results in excessive workloads, such as assigning them additional projects, weekend work, or shifts during holiday periods. Such practices lead to an imbalance in the division of responsibilities and foster a sense of injustice (McDonald et al., 2008),
- promotion and career development – there is a tendency to perceive childless employees as less stable and less committed to the organization. These beliefs influence decisions about promotions and the referral of employees to specialized training and strategic projects. It has been suggested that childless individuals are not as socially embedded as their parents, and therefore their loyalty to the organization may be lower (Park, 2002).

These mechanisms are part of a broader framework of so-called covert discrimination, in which seemingly neutral criteria favor certain groups of employees over others. Although difficult to clearly identify and legally regulate, their consequences are real. They lead to perpetuation of inequalities and limit the career opportunities of childless individuals (Acker, 2006).

Experiencing unequal treatment due to childlessness has multifaceted psychosocial consequences. Research indicates that childless individuals experience a sense of isolation, reduced job satisfaction, and an increased risk of burnout (Gillespie, 2003; Park, 2002). Lack of recognition of their life situation contributes to deepening social exclusion and, consequently, leads to lower self-esteem and decreased professional motivation (Letherby, 1999).

The psychological costs of this discrimination affect not only the individual but also team relationships. Childless individuals are more likely to report a lack of a sense of belonging within their co-workers and difficulty building relationships in an environment dominated by parenting-related activities (Shapiro, 2014). In the long term, this leads to marginalization, reduced engagement, and limited creativity for employees who do not conform to the dominant “parenting norm.”

From an organizational perspective, the consequences of this process are measurable. Marginalizing childless employees leads to a loss of innovative potential and a reduction in diversity within teams (Shore et al., 2011). Organizations that ignore the exclusion of childless individuals risk losing valuable employees, especially in the context of global demographic trends, where the percentage of childless individuals is steadily increasing (Rowland, 2007).

The psychosocial consequences of unequal treatment of childless individuals should therefore be considered at both the individual and organizational levels.

While for individuals, they often result in emotional burden and a sense of marginalization, for organizations, they pose a barrier to building an inclusive work culture and the effective utilization of human resources.

In response to the challenges related to the unequal treatment of childless people, it is necessary to develop inclusive personnel policies.

Key practical solutions include:

- designing benefits that are neutral to family status – organizations should offer benefits available to all employees, rather than limiting support solely to family-friendly benefits (Kossek et al., 2011),
- flexibility in work time and location – flexibility policies should be available to all employees, not just parents. Inclusive work time solutions increase employee satisfaction, engagement, and retention (Hill et al., 2008),
- educating managers and employees about biases – training programs on unconscious bias can help identify and reduce stereotypes associated with childlessness (Kalev et al., 2006),
- promoting diverse lifestyles and work-life balance – work-life balance policies should go beyond parenthood and consider various forms of self-fulfillment (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011).

Research indicates that organizations that implement inclusive HR policies reap tangible benefits in the form of greater innovation, a better organizational climate, and greater employee loyalty. Creating a work environment that embraces diversity, including family status, is therefore not only an ethical and legal requirement but also a strategic element of competitive advantage (Roberson, 2006).

Taking the perspective of childless individuals into account in HR policies is a step toward a more inclusive labor market. This approach aligns with the concept of diversity management, which assumes that each employee's personal characteristic, including family status, can be both a source of barriers and an organizational resource (Shore et al., 2011). Integrating this perspective into HR policies is important not only from the perspective of ethics and labor law but also from the perspective of strategic benefits for the organization, such as increased innovation, a better organizational climate, and higher employee engagement (Roberson, 2006).

This discussion provides a basis for interpreting the results of a pilot study aimed at capturing early signs of unequal treatment of childless employees in Polish organizations. This research may contribute to opening academic and practical discussions on the need to consider diverse workplace models and create HR policies free from discrimination based on family status.

Pilot study methodology

A pilot study on childlessness as a hidden reason for unequal treatment of employees was conducted between December 2024 and July 2025 in two formats: paper (38 participants) and online (16 participants). A total of 54 people participated in the study. The respondents justified their choice of the paper questionnaire with the need to maintain anonymity and a lack of trust in online forms in the context of such

a sensitive topic. Additionally, personal contact with the study's investigators enabled a brief conversation that enriched the research material with contextual information and emotional responses.

The decision to conduct a pilot study arose from the need to examine the scale of the problem, which had been highlighted by the respondents in other research areas conducted by the authors. The participants' comments confirmed that the topic is important, often overlooked, and for many, a source of psychological pain.

Characteristics of the study participants group

The pilot study, which included 54 individuals, focused exclusively on childlessness among the childless group to examine the scale of the problem in this specific population. Currently, the study is being continued in an expanded format, involving two groups (childless and those with children), which will enable a comprehensive comparative analysis.

The questionnaire was constructed based on clearly defined research objectives, selecting simple and unambiguous questions and arranging them in a logical order – from general to specific. The pilot phase examined the comprehensibility of the questions, the time required to complete them, and potential interpretation difficulties. Standardization of the tool was ensured by the use of uniform response scales (e.g., Likert scales), consistent language and question structure, and clear instructions for respondents, which enabled comparability of results and assessment of the questionnaire's reliability.

The main goal of this pilot study was to verify the hypothesis that childlessness is a hidden cause of unequal treatment in the workplace. Due to the specific nature of the topic, a purposive sampling approach was chosen, allowing for precise targeting of individuals directly experiencing the phenomenon under investigation. Directing the study exclusively to childless individuals was a priority, aiming to determine the real extent to which the problem of discrimination or marginalization of this group exists within the professional structures of potential participants in future phases of the study.

The study included 54 individuals, all of whom (100%) confirmed their childlessness status (Table 1). This homogeneity of the sample in terms of this key characteristic guarantees high validity of the study and allows the analysis of the phenomenon from the perspective of those directly involved in the problem. Among the respondents, most women (72%, $n = 39$) were noted compared to men (28%, $n = 15$). The predominance of women may indicate both their greater willingness to share their experiences of childlessness in a psychological and social context and stronger social pressures regarding motherhood. This gender disparity is not accidental and can be interpreted in two ways:

- social perspective: women continue to be subjected to stronger pressure to procreate, which means their childlessness is more likely to be the subject of social and professional judgment,
- psychological perspective: women are statistically more willing to share difficult experiences and self-therapeutically analyze their life situation.

Table 1. Characteristics of the research sample

| PARTICIPANTS | | NUMBER | |
|---|---|---------------|---------------------|
| Sex | WOMEN | 39 | TOTAL 54 |
| | MEN | 15 | |
| – all study participants declared that they were childless | | | |
| Age range | 18-25 | 0 | |
| | 26-35 | 4 | |
| | 36-45 | 24 | |
| | 46-55 | 12 | |
| | 56 years and over | 14 | |
| – the largest group were people aged 36-45 | | | |
| Domicile | Village | 5 | |
| | City up to 20,000 inhabitants | 16 | |
| | City with 20,000 to 100,000 inhabitants | 12 | |
| | City with over 100,000 inhabitants | 21 | |
| – respondents came from various types of localities | | | |
| Education | Basic | 0 | |
| | General averages | 7 | |
| | Secondary vocational education | 2 | |
| | Higher education – bachelor's degree | 14 | |
| | Higher – engineering | 5 | |
| | Higher – Master's degree | 22 | |
| | Higher – academic degree (PhD, Prof.) | 4 | |
| – the vast majority of respondents have higher education | | | |
| Size of the company where respondents work | Micro (up to 9 employees) | 11 | |
| | Small (10-49) | 9 | |
| | Medium (50-249) | 18 | |
| | Large (over 250) | 16 | |
| – respondents work in companies of various sizes | | | |
| Reason for not having children | Own decision | 11 | |
| | Partner's decision | 5 | |
| | Random event | 7 | |
| | Treatment errors | 24* | |
| | Misdiagnosis | 28* | |
| | Illness | 7 | |
| | Other | 0 | |
| * 24 people marked both “treatment errors” and “misdiagnosis” | | | |

Source: Own study

The largest group consisted of respondents aged 36-45. This is the stage of life when childlessness ceases to be perceived as “deferred parenthood” and becomes a biological and social fact. The lack of participants under 25 confirms the thesis that very young people rarely define their childlessness as a permanent or identity-based state, making the problem of discrimination less acute or premature in their eyes.

The strongest group consisted of respondents aged 36-45, for whom the issue of childlessness is particularly important from a biological and social perspective, while the absence of people under 25 suggests that younger people do not perceive the problem of childlessness as a permanent condition affecting them.

The respondents came from various types of locations, and the predominance of people from large cities may indicate greater openness to participating in the research or easier access to information about them, which ensures a diverse social context.

Most respondents have higher education, which may indicate a greater awareness of the problem and a willingness to understand and work through it. This may also influence how they interpret their own experiences and their willingness to articulate them.

Respondents work in companies of varying sizes, which can indicate a wide range of professional environments where childlessness may be a topic of concern both personally and professionally. This may also impact access to psychological or medical support.

The most frequently cited causes of childlessness were medical in nature, such as misdiagnosis or treatment errors, suggesting the existence of systemic problems in healthcare leading to lasting life consequences. The small number of individuals who indicated their own decision indicates that, for most respondents, childlessness was the result of circumstances beyond their control, not a conscious choice.

Characteristics of the study participants group – substantive part

All 54 participants in the study reported experiencing discrimination due to their childlessness. The unanimity of these responses indicates the widespread and systemic nature of the problem. Childlessness, while often considered a private matter, in practice impacts working conditions and professional relationships.

Table 2. Characteristics of the research sample

| PROFESSIONAL SITUATION | Discrimination by co-workers | Discrimination by management |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| | Number of people | Number of people |
| Vacation planning | 41 (76%) | 37 (69%) |
| Planning replacements | 38 (70%) | 33 (61%) |
| Holiday duty | 46 (85%) | 48 (89%) |
| Work schedule | 42 (78%) | 47 (87%) |
| Social benefits | 49 (91%) | 49 (91%) |
| Medical packages | 12 (22%) | 5 (9%) |
| Insurance programs | 39 (72%) | 39 (72%) |

Source: Own study

Table 2 presents the number of people who experienced discrimination from coworkers and management in various work situations. The data reveal clear patterns of unequal treatment of childless people.

Holiday shifts and work schedules – the biggest burden:

- most cases of discrimination concern holiday shifts (94 responses in total) and work schedules (80 responses),
- childless people are more often assigned to work during holiday periods, which may be due to the assumption that they are “more available.”

It is an informal practice that can lead to chronic overload and a sense of injustice.

Discrimination by management – a structural problem:

- there are significant instances of discrimination by management in each category, indicating that the problem is not limited to relationships between employees,
- this is particularly evident in the areas of social benefits and work planning.

Discrimination against childless people is also rooted in organizational decisions, not just in everyday interactions.

The analysis of the obtained results is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Differences between discrimination by coworkers and management

| Analysis area | Co-workers | Management |
|---------------------------------|--|---|
| Nature of activities | Informal practices resulting from beliefs and stereotypes (“greater availability”) | Formal organizational decisions, rooted in company structures and policies |
| Examples of situations | Holiday shifts, replacement planning, and vacations | Work schedule, social benefits, insurance programs |
| The scale of the problem | It mainly concerns daily duties and interpersonal relationships | Covers key areas of employment and benefits, influencing long-term working conditions |
| Consequences | A sense of injustice, tensions within the team, isolation | Marginalization in access to benefits, work overload, lack of a sense of security |
| Employee perception | Often dismissed as a “natural” consequence of childlessness | Perceived as more serious because it stems from formal decisions and is more difficult to challenge |
| Employee reactions | Less frequently reported, fear of conflict in the team | More frequently reported, although 1/3 remains silent for fear of consequences |
| The most affected areas | Holiday shifts, vacation planning | Work schedule, social benefits, benefit structure |

Source: Own study

Respondents viewed discrimination by coworkers as everyday and relational, while discrimination by management was systemic and structural. Both forms reinforce each other: informal practices within teams are perpetuated by organizational decisions.

The result is a double burden on childless people in both horizontal and vertical relationships.

Marginalization in access to benefits:

- fewer people report discrimination in healthcare packages and insurance programs, but these are still important signals,
- people without children may be overlooked in benefit structures that favor parents.

Benefit systems may unwittingly exclude childless individuals, reinforcing their sense of marginalization. The study shows that they are vulnerable to discrimination in both horizontal and vertical relationships, particularly in areas related to working hours and access to benefits. Therefore, organizations should implement equal treatment policies that consider the diverse life situations of all employees, not just parents.

Management's actions confirm that discrimination is not limited to horizontal relationships but also occurs within decision-making structures. Data regarding work schedules and holiday shifts, which can lead to overloading childless individuals, are particularly concerning.

Discriminatory situations: 35 individuals, 19 did not take this step. Although the majority decided to report the incident, nearly one-third of the respondents did not share their experiences, which may stem from a lack of trust in the institution or fear of repercussions (Table 4).

Table 4. Recipients of applications

| Recipient of the notification | Number of people |
|-------------------------------|------------------|
| Immediate superior | 11 |
| Top management | 7 |
| Company owner | 14 |
| Personnel/HR department | 21 |
| Spokesman | 9 |
| Trade unions | 32 |
| Social labor inspector | 2 |

Source: Own study

Trade unions were the most frequently chosen reporting channel, highlighting their role as institutions of trust in conflict situations. The low number of reports directed at superiors and management suggests a lack of effective response mechanisms within management structures.

The unanimous recognition of the limitation of support for childless people as a form of discrimination shows that the problem of unequal treatment in the workplace is real and requires systemic solutions and greater social sensitivity.

Research limitations

When analyzing the study results, it is important to note its limitations, such as:

- small sample size – this is a characteristic feature of pilot studies, as they typically involve a small number of participants, which limits the ability to generalize the results to the entire population – in the case of this study, the sample consisted of only 54 respondents,
- lack of full representativeness – the sample selection was purposeful, not random. This means that the results may not reflect all contexts of the researched reality,
- limited statistical power – due to the small number of observations, it is difficult to obtain significant statistical results. The pilot study described was aimed at verifying the general state of the situation, not testing hypotheses,
- risk of methodological errors – although the aim of the pilot study is to detect errors, its limited scale may not reveal all problems,
- limited interpretability of the results – the obtained results are not considered clear scientific evidence. They serve as a guide for the authors to conduct the actual study.

A pilot study on a sample of 54 childless individuals allowed us to assess the scale of the issue under investigation, but at this stage of the study, it did not provide a basis for drawing broad conclusions about the entire population. The results should be considered indicative, serving to refine the methodology and prepare the main study.

Further research plan

Analyzing the results obtained during the pilot, the following research phase was planned:

1. Expanding the sample size will allow for a larger number of participants to achieve greater representativeness. The sample design also included consideration of various industries, job levels, and regions.
2. Comparison between respondent groups to analyze differences between childless individuals and parents in terms of job satisfaction, work-life balance, and benefit utilization, as well as examining differences within the childless group (e.g., intentionally childless individuals vs. those planning to have children).
3. Applying mixed research methods, combining quantitative research (surveys, statistical tests) with qualitative research (in-depth interviews, focus groups). This will allow for the capture and analysis of both the quantitative context of the study and the narratives provided by the respondents.

4. Applying longitudinal analysis – panel studies to determine how the attitudes and needs of childless individuals change over time.

Future research plans include expanding the sample to include greater representativeness across industries, job titles, and regions. It also includes cross-group comparisons, mixed methods, and longitudinal analysis to capture both quantitative differences and qualitative narratives, as well as changes in attitudes among childless individuals over time.

Recommendations for HR practitioners

Considering the diversity of experiences, the pilot results only paint a partial picture. HR should remember that childless individuals differ in terms of age, professional status, motivation, and life plans. HR policies must be flexible to address the diverse needs of employees:

- avoiding stereotypes – it should not be assumed that childless people always have greater availability or fewer workloads. HR should examine individual employee needs instead of relying on simplifications,
- balance in benefits – support programs (e.g., childcare, flexible working hours) should be designed so as not to exclude childless people. Neutral benefits (e.g., additional days off, mental health support) should be considered,
- building an inclusive organizational culture – HR should ensure that communication and practices do not suggest that having children is the “norm” or a condition for full acceptance within the company,
- monitoring satisfaction and engagement – it is worth implementing regular surveys and developmental conversations to ensure that childless people feel treated fairly and have equal access to development.

A pilot study with a sample of 59 childless individuals indicates that HR should avoid stereotypes and design policies and benefits that are inclusive and neutral to employees' diverse life situations. The results are indicative and serve as a signal for further broader research that will better tailor HR practices to the needs of the entire population.

Practical recommendations for organizations

The research material obtained provides an important foundation for developing guidelines for organizations aimed at preventing covert discrimination in the workplace. Although overt discrimination is increasingly being identified and eliminated through legal regulations and equality policies, subtle forms of unequal treatment can still occur in everyday organizational practices. These can manifest themselves in the way responsibilities are assigned, access to benefits, internal communication, and organizational culture. The proposed actions include the following:

- developing a final report with guidelines for HR, including examples of good practices and implementation tools,
- testing pilot solutions in selected companies and assessing their effectiveness.

A pilot study on a sample of 59 childless individuals offers valuable insights but requires further investigation. HR should treat the results as a signal for further action, not as a complete picture of the situation. Expanded research will allow for the development of more equitable and inclusive HR policies.

Experiences of discrimination – summary

Study participants reported a sense of unequal treatment related to childlessness, including additional responsibilities during vacation periods and less favorable employee benefits structures. It was emphasized that such practices are sometimes accepted by management and impact team relationships.

The results suggest that childlessness, although perceived as a private matter, can have professional consequences. The unanimity of the responses indicates that the issue is significant and requires further analysis. Due to the pilot nature of the study, the conclusions should be considered preliminary, indicating the need for in-depth research and reflection on organizational policy.

A pilot study conducted on a sample of 59 childless individuals revealed the limitations typical of this type of project – its small scale, limited representativeness, and the tentative nature of the results. Nevertheless, it provided valuable guidance for HR practitioners, emphasizing the need to avoid stereotypes, design neutral benefits, build an inclusive organizational culture, and monitor employee satisfaction.

The resulting evidence provides a foundation for developing guidelines for organizations to prevent covert discrimination and foster diversity in the workplace. The next phase of research should include sample expansion, cross-group comparisons (childless individuals vs. parents), mixed methods, and longitudinal analysis to capture both quantitative differences and qualitative narratives, as well as changes in attitudes over time.

The findings from the pilot indicate that further research is necessary to develop practical and equitable HR solutions that support all employees regardless of their family situation.

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BEZDIETNOŚĆ JAKO UKRYTY POWÓD NIERÓWNEGO TRAKTOWANIA PRACOWNIKÓW – WYNIKI BADANIA PILOTAŻOWEGO

Streszczenie: Współczesne środowisko pracy coraz częściej podkreśla znaczenie równości i inkluzywności, lecz nadal istnieją obszary dyskryminacji, które pozostają słabo rozpoznane. Jednym z nich jest bezdietność, rzadko analizowana jako potencjalna przesłanka nierównego traktowania. Wyniki badania pilotażowego pokazują, że choć bezdietność nie jest formalnie uznawana za podstawę dyskryminacji, może wpływać na postrzeganie zawodowe oraz relacje w miejscu pracy. Celem badania było zidentyfikowanie mechanizmów mogących prowadzić do marginalizacji tej grupy, w tym przejawów tzw. „rodzinnego uprzywilejowania”, polegającego na faworyzowaniu osób posiadających dzieci w zakresie przydziału obowiązków, awansów czy dostępu do elastycznych form pracy. Artykuł stanowi wstęp do szerszej refleksji nad potrzebą uwzględniania perspektyw osób bezdietnych w politykach równościowych i strategiach zarządzania różnorodnością.

Słowa kluczowe: bezdietność, zarządzanie różnorodnością, przywileje rodzinne, polityki HR, nierówne traktowanie pracowników, dyskryminacja w miejscu pracy

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