Occupational Prestige and Labor Market Institutions

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Abstract

In this paper, we ask a question whether regulation of professions is related to occupational prestige by employees. We investigate, whether legal control of an access to selected professions is related with these professions' prestige and in which circumstances. The question seems to be significant from the perspective of peoples' decisions about desired career paths. Occupational prestige may by itself affect utility of workers. Analysis of the determinants of occupational prestige still constitutes an underexploited niche. In this paper we aim to respond to this lacuna and provide a systematic analysis of the problem from institutional perspective. We draw on literature in new institutional economics, law and economics, labor economics, and related fieldsto conceptualize the possible channels and directions of institutions' impact on occupational prestige. We also conduct the empirical research, basing on the data since 1992 till 2010 for Polish labor market and verify whether conclusions from the literature, are valid in this case. It turned out that factors significant for employee's subjective prestige perception are restrictions concerning an access to a profession, income, age, education, marital status and parents' professional prestige. The obtained results contribute to a better understanding of the nature of labor market institutions and their impact on people's decisions regarding career, and provide theoretical underpinnings for empirical studies. The outcome of the econometric research on the occupational prestige in relation top articular Polish institutional settings serve as a base for polemics with theoretical issues and may be valuable for labor market policy design.

Keywords: occupational prestige, regulation of professions, labour market, institutional economics.

JEL Classification: J88, K31, O17.

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Introduction

A subject of occupational prestige is a field of interest manifested by sociologists, economists as well as psychologists. In fact, there is no single and precise definition of this phenomenon. Describing it very briefly, occupational prestige stands for the position held in a social structure. The main aim of this paper is to investigate the key determinants of occupational prestige levels, focusing particularly on the fact on regulating some professions. Our goal is to identify and interpret the relationship lying behind these issues.

Link between occupational prestige and regulation of access to professions seems to be currently important. Available literature suggests that some of our most crucial decisions refer to career path – about school, studies, additional courses and then, about particular workplaces and employment contracts. While choosing the desired occupation, people consider not only income level, but also other factors that lead to higher occupational prestige.

Some of professions are less attainable because of the social hierarchy or great amount of trainings and certifications necessary to obtain a title necessary to work in such occupation. Identifying the determinants of high professional prestige may shed more light on how people choose their occupation and job. Moreover, this kind of analysis could be also valuable in terms of public policy regarding labour market regulations. In order to go deeper into this research, we check if regulations considering an access to selected professions is related to the level of occupational prestige. It may have very serious implications from the point of view of the society and the policymaker. First, it could be significant for people remaining in working age. But second, it is also important for rent-seeking and lobbying group that the legislator has to cope with. Some opposing interests and clearly observable.

We divide our investigation into three parts. The first one stands for the literature review on the topic theoretical foundations devoted to occupational prestige. Then, we present our empirical model regarding Polish labour market and occupational prestige issues. The last section is the conclusions from the research and its implications for public policy. Our ambition is to provide both a value-added to economic literature and some findings that are useful for legislative bodies.

Theoretical Foundations

First, it is considerable to present selected definitions of occupational prestige. Occupational prestige is a form of an underpinning of social respect and trust regarding one's professional status (Treiman 2013). Knowledge about prestige of a set of professions could be crucial in terms of making a decision on future career or as an incentive in gathering human capital. Jobs are also a form of determinant of social status (Hollingshead 1975). Thus, occupational prestige may affect decisions regarding career path, because of a willingness to achieve a possibly high social status. One should keep in mind that perception of occupational prestige among society members is usually diverse and strongly heterogeneous at individuals' level (Armer 1968). It is almost impossible to propose a universal occupational prestige hierarchy, even if similarities are observed (Haller, Lewis 1966).

Occupational prestige is often an offshoot of a job holder's education, place of residence and income level. Usually, highly desired and prestigious jobs mean also high salary (Nakao, Treas 1992). However, there are exceptions from this rule. For instance, academic staff is almost always ranked among prestigious professions, but in a number of countries faculty members are not paid so well. Another example may be the case of priesthood around the globe. Nevertheless, wealthy people are, as a rule, regarded as ones with outstandingly high social status, because of the scope of goods they can afford and their potential impact on the society (Treiman 2013). It is inevitably linked with professions they perform. Education plays an important role in terms of occupational prestige. Most prestigious professions usually require a particular specialist education (Treiman 2013; Barringer, Takeuchi, Xenos 1990). It is not only about university education degree, but also about degree in the field.

It also turns out that occupational prestige is related to social mission of jobs (e.g. physicians, judges) and usability of work (e.g. engineers, miners) (Treiman 2013). Aspects like creativity of work or social service matter as well. People tend to perceive occupations also through the perspective of professional honesty and reliability (Coxon, Jones 1978).

Another factor that have an impact on occupational prestige perception is the fact of managing people (Albeno, Garbin, Bates 1961). As a general rule, people whose duties include supervision over employees and managerial duties, are perceived as successful. As a result, jobs associated with such responsibilities are as a rule more prestigious. Thus, the position within the internal structure of the firm is relevant.

Additionally, occupations characterized by responsible tasks that require creativity, intelligence and social skills are usually ranked as prestigious (Treiman 2013).

Age is another interesting aspect of occupational prestige (Barnett 1975). Traditionally, the most prestigious occupations were accessible to middle-aged people (e.g. professors, CEOs). It was connected with gaining experience through years as well as social respect. It is still an observable tendency, but nowadays, prestigious jobs are also available to relatively young people (e.g. entrepreneurs, IT specialists).

Gender issues seem to be relevant in terms of occupational prestige (Xu, Leffler 1992). Different aspects of a particular job may be appreciated by men and women. Men more often choose jobs that are related to development opportunities creativity and attractive income, whereas women seems to look more often at social security, comfortable working conditions and social status of a profession. Additionally, devaluation theory assumes that female occupations and tasks are less valued (Magnusson 2009). Obviously, it is just a generalization. What is more, some tendencies among men and women in undertaking selected professions, could affect their perception and social status (Bergmann 1974).

Prestigious professions are usually featured by high satisfaction from a job (Weaver 1977). It seems quite expected, since prestige occupations often go with a list of benefits like high remuneration, managerial responsibilities or social importance. However, job satisfaction is dependent i.a. on employee's iq and individual preferences (Ganzach 1997). On one hand, more intelligent people get ambitious and challenging tasks and are able to get a promotion faster than on average (Garbin, Bates 1961). On the other hand, intelligent people may suffer from a dissatisfaction caused by mismatched and too simple duties. Such an effect could be also visible for well-educated and overeducated employees.

Parent's occupational prestige could have an impact on their children's occupational prestige (Dubow, Boxer, Huesmann 2009). This effect could occur, because parents that perform respected profession with a high degree of prestige, naturally do their best to provide adequate preparation for their children, to enable for them getting a very attractive job, also characterized by high occupational prestige. Thanks to another described features (i.a. high income or organizational power), they are capable of providing so good background (human capital, social connections).

Moreover, a type of sector where respondents are employed, could also have an impact on occupational prestige (Lyons et al. 2006). It depends on a particular state, its credibility and social trust for public offices, whether jobs from public or private sector are recognized as more prestigious. In some cases it even does not make a change – for instance – for medicals hired in different sectors.

There are studies devoted to the issue of wage premiums. Some of them prove that there is such a premium for people that are married (Pfeffer, Ross 1982). In fact, it is hard to adapt directly this phenomenon to occupational prestige issue. This premium in terms of occupational prestige would mean that after people get married, they have more prestigious jobs. They would change their professions then. So it would be not only about promotions and salary raises, but mainly about changing the profession. It seems to be an underexploited problem.

Another interesting aspect about occupational prestige sphere is a subjective point of view associated with rating jobs (Nakao, Treas 1994). People tend to be biased because of their own profession. There are several different indexes and measures of occupational prestige available (Treiman 2013; Stevens, Featherman 1981; Featherman, Hauser 1976). First group of such indexes in based on questionnaires about respondents' own profession. Second one is related to evaluation of a whole set of professions. In this paper we refer to the second group of indexes, because we believe that they reflect the reality more thoroughly. People while rating their own professional prestige may overestimate it. In our empirical study we employ the Treiman's index, which is described in the following section.

What is also crucial, is that social perception of occupational prestige is constantly being affected by mass communication (McLeod, Ward, Tancill 1965; Haller, Holsinger, Saraiva 1972). So for instance, people try to impress others by performing some prestigious occupation. This phenomenon is also linked with seasonal tendencies regarding jobs. Another studies point out that different approaches to occupational prestige are present in over-industrial and industrial states or modernized and modernizing ones (Marsh 1971). A possible justification is that some tendencies are present is societies despite levels of industrialization. It may occur as long as most prestigious jobs often require some similar characteristics like as education, authority or income, which are identified as most important determinants of occupational prestige.

With reference to notes presented above, role of stereotypes with reference to occupational prestige should be mentioned. Stereotypes affect social perception of occupational prestige significantly (Thielbar, Feldman 1969). However, their impact on occupational index of a particular job may be either positive or negative. One of the most crucial stereotypes present on labour market is linked with professional's gender (Jacobs, Powell 1985). It is observed that jobs performed mostly by women are evaluated as less prestigious. Identical effect is valid for the same position – if occupied by men, it is perceived as more prestigious (Glick 1991). This effect is usually associated with remuneration, which is on average lover for women (Weaver

1978). Additionally, some differences of occupational prestige may evolve from race biases (Quinn, Mangione, de Mandiltovitch 1973; Grodsky, Pager 2001). Professions occupied by white people are scored as more prestigious comparing to other races (Barringer, Takeuchi, Xenos 1990).

Another element that may play a role in the context of occupational prestige is the impact of regulations on access to professions. Studies show that professions with limited access, due to obligatory exams, certificates or another requirements, are usually more prestigious (Luzzo 1996). It is a tough question whether limited access to selected jobs raises their prestige per se or it is associated with professions characterized by social responsibility and trust (e.g. lawyers, medicals, architects). Not all of professions with limited access are prestigious (e.g. taxi drivers). However, if limited access is dedicated to professions with good remuneration, high social position and other desired features, it makes such jobs exclusive assets. Such exclusive assets usually generate future streams of attractive benefits and could affect decisions regarding career paths. Obviously, regulations on access to professions may have different strength. For instance, sometimes just short-courses or paid licenses are enough, while in other cases difficult and multiple exams and long-term practice is required (Pascarella, Smart, Smylie 1992). Again, it is a challenge to state a universal scale of such regulatory limitations' strengths. It affects empirical analyses on the topic not only because of different approaches to the problem, but also because availability of data.

Formal institutions stating the access to particular jobs could be targeted by rentseeking groups (Krueger 1974). In this context, the most suitable example is about professional autonomies that may influence legislation at the national level. Such autonomies or clubs have a point in limiting the number of some occupations in order to keep their market positions. The less lawyers are functioning on the market, the better is the position of a single lawyer. In some extreme cases it may even harm the balance of labour market and it may lead to serious social problems (Agell 2002).

In the following section we verify presented theoretical expectation by conducting an empirical analysis. Our model is devoted to the case of Polish labour market because of its transformational character and the availability of data. We aimed at conducting an analysis to check the determinants of occupational prestige in the context of developing economy, regulatory transformation and evolving social attitudes towards different jobs.

Data

We use the data from the Polish General Social Survey 1992-2010 (PGSS) conducted by the Robert B. Zajonc Institute for Social Studies. The main goal of the survey is to follow the social trends in Poland and to track the effects of social changes and transformation there. The respondents of the survey may be classified as nationally representative sample of adults. The database is internationally comparable, e.g. with the International Social Survey Programme(ISSP) data.

The PGSS database includes for instance information about demographics (age, gender, marital status), labour market (education, income level, occupation), life satisfaction (salary satisfaction, job satisfaction), personal history (parents' labour market characteristics) and an occupational prestige measure.

In our empirical model we employ the Treiman's occupational prestige index. It is a standardized and internationally comparative scale of occupational prestige (Treiman 1977 and Treiman, Graaf and Ganzeboom 1992). The Treiman's occupational prestige scale was employed by the PGSS after 1992 and adopted to current classification of professions, basing on the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO 1988). In 1996, D.J. Treiman and H.B.G. Ganzeboom developed new scales of social prestige, in line with the ISCO 1988. New scales were used to measure the status of Polish occupations in the merged data collected by the PGSS between 1992 and 2010. The scales substituted old scales of prestige with regard to respondents, their spouses and parents. Thus, the database provided by the PGSS for years 1992–2010 for occupational prestige is internationally comparable. In 2015, the ISCO was updated.

Model

One of the crucial components of our model is the dummy variable on whether an occupation is regulated or not in Poland. This distinction is based on the official EU regulated professions database¹ and is coded by us. Occupation is defined as 'regulated' (coded as 1) when it is included in the presented list, while 'unregulated' professions

http://ec.europa.eu/growth/tools-databases/regprof/index.cfm?action=regprofs&id_country=23&quid=1&mode=asc&maxRows=*#top%20

are those that cannot be found on the list. In our data we are able to distinguish 402 occupations (coded according to ISCO 1988), from which 88 can be defined as 'regulated'.

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The model takes the following form: prestige_i = \alpha + \beta_1 regulated_i + \beta_2 X_i + \varepsilon_i
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where *prestige* stands for the Treiman's occupational prestige index of an occupation performer by i; $regulated_i$ represents the regulated profession and X_i is for other characteristics like as gender, age, marital status, education level and income. Another factors that we take into account, because of theoretical underpinnings are occupational prestige of parents' jobs, satisfaction from a job of a respondent and satisfaction from a salary.

We perform the estimation of linear correlation (OLS) between personal characteristics of respondents, institutions present on labour market (regulation) and prestige of the occupation.

Results

The key aim of our analysis is to explore the relationships between occupational prestige and the fact that the profession is regulated by the state in Poland. We applied a linear ordinary least squares model and controls for individual characteristics of a person and year fixed effects.

Correlation between occupational prestige and regulation of the profession is positive and robust in all our specifications. The effect is weaker when the individual characteristics are included, what is not driven by a change in the sample size. On average, the effect of regulation may be compared to afour thousand szłotys (around one thousand US dollars) of salary difference. This is twice as much as an average salary in the sample in the 2010, which is the last year of the sample data. This comparis on suggests that the regulation of the profession may berelatively important for the occupational prestige in Poland. At the same time, higher education is four times more important (in comparison to no education at all) than regulation.

Our results for the individual controls mostly confirm hypotheses based on the available literature, but not in all cases. On the one hand, educational level, income and age is positively correlated with occupational prestige. On the other hand, gender of the worker appears to be unimportant. This may suggest that Poland might be an

exception in the context of the prestige of the typically female and male professions. For the results see Table 1.

Table 1. Occupational prestige and regulated professions

	Occupational prestige	Occupational prestige	Occupational prestige	Occupational prestige
Occupationun derregulation	10.48***	10.36***	5.436***	5.437***
	(0.229)	(0.318)	(0.259)	(0.258)
Age			0.0365***	0.0504***
			(0.0107)	(0.0116)
Female			-0.0562	0.0472
			(0.222)	(0.224)
Basic education			-1.116	-0.901
			(1.332)	(1.333)
Secondary education			6.211***	6.437***
			(1.336)	(1.338)
Highe reducation			20.19***	20.36***
			(1.361)	(1.362)
Income (in thousands of zloty)			0.953***	0.953***
			(0.108)	(0.108)
Marital status				included
	26.25***	26.00***	21 (2)***	20.01***
Constant	36.25***	36.98***	31.63***	30.81***
	(0.105)	(0.425)	(1.435)	(1.459)
Observations	14,576	7,065	7,065	7,065
R-squared	0.125	0.136	0.476	0.478

Notes: Results of the OLS regressions. Dependent variable is an individual's occ.upation prestige measure in Treiman's (1996) scale. Standard errors in parentheses. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

In addition, we explore a wide range of issues that are covered by the survey to provide more information on relationships between occupational prestige and less typical individual characteristics in the context of regulation of the profession. We observe that the size of the correlation parameter is robust on the individual characteristics. Apart from demographic features like age, gender, education, income

and marital status, we analyzed parents' professions prestige and self-reported satisfaction from a job and from a salary.

In line with our expectations, we find that parents' occupations prestige is positively correlated with their children occupation's prestige. Mother's occupational prestige effect is stronger for women, while father's one correlate with both gender children occupational prestige on a comparable level.

Interestingly, we observe that satisfaction from a job is related to general profession's prestige, whereas satisfaction from the salary is not. Moreover, relationship between prestige and satisfaction from a job is nonlinear, and probability of being satisfied from a job is much higher when the occupation is considered as prestigious (see Table 2).

Table 2. Occupational prestige and regulated professions

	Occupational prestige	Occupational prestige	Occupational prestige	Occupational prestige
Occupationunderregulation	5.698***	5.651***	5.350***	5.460***
	(0.324)	(0.324)	(0.259)	(0.259)
Motheroccupationprestige	0.0968***	0.0706***		
	(0.0150)	(0.021)		
Fatheroccupationprestige	0.0796***	0.064***		
	(0.0150)	(0.021)		
Motheroccupationprestige * Female		0.053*		
		(0.029)		
Fatheroccupationprestige * Female		0.031		
		(0.029)		
Satisfaction from a job:				
Rathersatisfied			-1.436***	
			(0.277)	
Rather not satisfied			-2.369***	
			(0.380)	
Not satisfied			-1.682***	
			(0.639)	
Satisfaction from a salary:				
Moreor less satisfied				0.00863
				(0.383)
Not satisfied				-0.631
				(0.389)

Constant	25.13***	26.69***	32.53***	31.07***
	(1.738)	(1.837)	(1.481)	(1.496)
Observations	4,151	4,151	7,006	7,031

Notes: Results of the OLS regressions. Dependent variable is an individual's occupation prestige measure in Treiman's (1996) scale. Apart from parameters presented in the Table, all specifications includes age, gender, education, income and marital status of an individual and year fixed effects. Standard errors in parentheses. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Last, but not least, to check the robustness of the results over the years, we analyzed if the correlation between occupational prestige and regulation of the profession is recognized in each year sample (Table 3). We claim that the result is robust and there were no changes in this context between 1992 and 2010. Also the size of the parameters is comparable.

Table 3. Prestige of the occupation and its regulation over the years.

Year	Correlation parameter	Standard error	Observations	R-squared
1992	6.177***	(0.707)	768	0.545
1993	5.454***	(0.752)	705	0.531
1994	4.925***	(0.805)	680	0.492
1995	6.640***	(0.784)	679	0.510
1997	4.139***	(0.690)	998	0.441
1999	6.658***	(0.779)	836	0.464
2002	5.777***	(0.721)	931	0.528
2005	5.220***	(1.097)	460	0.508
2008	2.015*	(1.036)	468	0.456
2010	6.254***	(1.116)	540	0.421

Notes: Coefficients from the OLS regressions. Dependent variable is an individual's occupation prestige measure in Treiman's (1996) scale. The regressions where calculated separately for each year in the sample. Apart from parameters presented in the Table, all specifications includes age, gender, education, income and marital status of an individual. *** p < 0.01, ** p < 0.05, * p < 0.1

Conclusions

The aim of the paper was to contribute to a better understanding of the character and impact of determinants of occupational prestige with reference to regulation of

jobs. Recent cross-disciplinary researches regarding the relevance of formal rules for labour market practice that combine economics, legal and political science reveal the importance of this topic.

The empirical model regarding determinants of occupational prestige reveals that correlation between prestige measure of the occupation and the fact that it is regulated by the state is positive and robust both in respect to individual characteristics of individuals and time effects. We confirmed most of the hypotheses regarding correlations between individual characteristics and occupational prestige, except for gender dimension. Occupations performed by women in Poland seem to be on average as prestigious as occupations performed by men.

We also check whether occupational prestige is related to prestige of the parents occupations and we find a positive relationship. Finally, we checked whether prestige can be associated with more satisfaction from a job and a salary. We find a positive relationship in the first case, but no relation between prestige and satisfaction from the remuneration. This result sheds more light on the non-pecuniary benefits from prestigious jobs.

To conclude, this is, in our knowledge, the first attempt to show the relationship between prestige of the jobs and its regulation on the individual level data. Our results are very robust, but we explored only one market. Still, our analysis is not answering whether the regulation makes the occupation more prestigious or the other way around. This puzzle needs more careful analysis. Despite this, our approach is a first step to shed more light on the economic consequences of professions regulation, especially in the context of non-financial aspects of the labor market choices.

We believe that applying the proposed approach linking theoretical and empirical labour and regulatory economics literature with actual studies on labour market, issues of rights enforcement, discrimination, social preferences, stereotypes and career paths is a value added. It also serves as a significant contribution to the international literature on institutional economics, law & economics and labour economics. The more systematic empirical analysis may allow for formulating more reliable and scientifically-based recommendations on transition policies in order to create a formal setting conductive to the optimal functioning of the economy and society.

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