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The masculine and feminine business world – psychological mercantilism and perceptions of economic crisis and one's own success

Introduction

The belief that in the contemporary individualized world everyone, regardless of sex, age, or background, may decide their future and achieve success is evident not only in everyday life, but also in science. The manifestation of this may be the development of current positive psychology [Linley, Joseph 2007; Trzebińska 2008] or the availability of numerous training courses aimed at teaching methods to reach attempted goals. However, from the perspective of psychological studies, in which our debate is embedded, the question emerges whether everything depends on the strength of motivation, and whether persons performing the same tasks perceive their success in a similar way. The answers may be found in determining individual differences between people and indicating the significant ones, often in order to modify them later [e.g. proposals presented by Martin Seligman 2002]. Then, the question arises whether there are factors significant for success that are difficult to change – such as gender.

Contemporary studies on gender roles indicate that gender, as the “cultural lenses” [Mandal 2007:8, after: Bem 1983], influences our perception of reality, including subjective perception of success or quality of life [Paruzel-Czachura 2013b]. Psychologists stress the differences between women and men regarding perception of the world, personality, entering relationships, expressing emotions, incidence of mental disorders, possession of particular abilities, and many other aspects [Mandal 2003, 2007, 2012]. Besides gender, a significant factor

shaping our existence is paid work or lack of it, as well as numerous phenomena related to work such as stress or burnout syndrome [Sęk 2006; Bratkowiak 2007]. The immense role of the relationship between a sense of satisfaction and paid work is described by Grażyna Bartkowiak [2007], who, after Jan Tylka, stresses that these variables are significant not only from the individual perspective, but from the collective one as well – in other words, for our entire economy. In short: the more satisfied we are, the better society we will create. The subject literature indicates multiple differences related to gender and occupational activity regarding the level of earnings or materialism [Mandal 2007], work satisfaction, or a sense of success [Bartkowiak 2007]. Therefore, researchers stress the impact of femininity and masculinity and the sphere of work on people's mental functioning. At the same time, several political and economic changes have been recently observed that may also have an impact on aspects of mental life, such as the feeling of being threatened by crisis or a sense of success [Paruzel-Czachura 2011]. Classical studies reveal that people satisfied with their work and life before a crisis work better during the crisis [Bartkowiak 2007:104, after: March, Simon 1958]. Therefore, the analysis and modification of subjective feelings of people in respect to their satisfaction, success or attitude towards material goods – psychological mercantilism [Górnik-Durose 2007, 2008] – is necessary not only because of individual wellbeing, but also in the context of the proper functioning of both society and organization [Fromm 2012].

The objective of this article is to present the results of empirical surveys which indicate determinants significant for the perception of economic crisis, one's own success, the level of psychological mercantilism and subjective assessment of income. These factors are gender and employment status. The studies are supposed to help in understanding the mechanisms significant for the functioning of employed women and men in the era of crisis that started in 2007 and has gradually reached Europe [Falenta, Polinceusz, on-line]. The nation-wide studies were done in 2009–2010 in Poland.

The first part of the paper contains theoretical assumptions and research problems together with assumptions concerning the surveyed phenomena. The second part presents the results of the authors' own surveys conducted among 397 male and female entrepreneurs and employees in public and private companies.

A sense of success

The world of the 21st century has become the era of a "success craze", where having material assets, a "happy" family or social prestige seems to be an important aspect in a human's life. According to Małgorzata Chrupała [2000], in the contemporary world, success involves not only material goods and career advancement. It also stimulates entrepreneurship and overcoming obstacles, evokes joy and satisfaction, increases self-acceptance, and facilitates mental health. Like the term quality of life, success may be defined in various ways.

As the theoretical base for the discussion, the authors chose the model of success defined by Dominika Dej, Ute Stephan and Marian Gorgievsky of the Dresden University of Technology and Erasmus University in Rotterdam [see: Dej 2007, 2010, 2011a, 2011b; Stephan, Lukeš, Dej, Richter 2007; Dej, Stephan, Gorgievsky 2012; Dej, Stephan, Gorgievsky, Wegge, in edition]. According to their definition, success may be assessed in both an objective and subjective way [Dej 2007]. The objective criteria usually concern economic factors, such as profit, company turnover, an increase in the number of employees or innovations. The subjective criteria embrace satisfaction or achievement of personal or company goals. Arnold Cooper and Kendall Artz [1995] claim that subjective criteria may be better predictors of future decisions and behaviors of entrepreneurs than objective economic and business

criteria. Including the subjective criteria is important because of the indications of their significant role in enterprise management. There are companies which have been closed despite their objective development, as they could not ensure a sense of fulfillment to entrepreneurs. The reverse situation is also possible: too much involvement in company management can lead to maintaining an unprofitable enterprise.

Following Edwin Locke and Gary Latham's [1984] goal-setting theory, Dej, Stephan and Gorgievsky [2012] claim that people are satisfied only when they achieve goals important for themselves. Therefore their conception of success means a person who realizes important personal values. These values have been grouped into five dimensions: company success, social success, relations with employees and customers, personal financial success and personal non-financial success. Company success includes profitability, employment growth, income or profits, and innovations. Social success means contributing to the good of society, social responsibility for employees, and creating new jobs. Relations with employees and customers are understood through being on good terms with customers, employees' satisfaction and their loyalty towards the company, and a positive and supportive work atmosphere. Personal financial success means increasing one's own income, maintaining a high standard of living, and financial security. Non-financial personal success embraces such factors as maintaining a balance between private and professional life, finding time for oneself, making decisions and standing up to challenges, and personal development.

However, this conception only relates to entrepreneurs; therefore, for the purpose of the presented studies, it was extrapolated to the group of employees. It is assumed that an employee who works for a company which is in their opinion successful, will also perceive him/herself as a successful person [Mowday, Porter and Steers 1982]. However, such a situation may take place only after the employee's identification with a given organization is confirmed, according to the adaptability concept [Rogacka-Trawińska, Leśniowski 1980]. When analyzing the data obtained in this study, the overall success result was considered as well as two subscales concerning significance of the professed values and a degree of their fulfillment. The five dimensions described above were not included as their analysis was not possible because of the modification scale for employees.

Psychological mercantilism

The indicators of success are often material values. According to Małgorzata Górnik-Durose [2002], the notion of materialism is understood in various ways; it was named a religion, a lifestyle, a concept of “to have” rather than “to be”, orientation dependence, attitude, behaviors, beliefs, individual features, or values. Materialism remains an open category; the significant problem concerns the question of whether it involves possession of goods only or their gathering as well. Moreover, it is not only determined by individual but also cultural factors. The subject literature distinguishes “good” and “bad” materialism, called instrumental and terminal or functional and characterological. All positive aspects respective to materialism indicate that we own things in order to survive or satisfy some important non-material needs. If possessing things becomes the value in itself and is the condition for life satisfaction, then we deal with the “bad” side of materialism.

Redefinition of materialism, in the form of the psychological mercantilism idea worked out by Górnik-Durose [2007, 2008], involves values, motivations, a mercantile vision of the world and the individual’s self-presentation (the “Peacock” presentation). Persons with a high level of psychological mercantilism recognize the superiority of external, materialistic values, and external motivation; they perceive their own value depending on the goods they possess and their popularity. Therefore, psychological mercantilism may be called “the set of beliefs concerning the way the world is organized and the rules of its functioning” [Górnik-Durose 2008:13]. It is defined as “psycho-behavioral complex (a set of mental processes and tendencies towards behaving in a particular way), whose core is the belief that the most important goal in social relations is obtaining external advantages (money, image, and fame)” [Górnik-Durose 2008:16]. Psychological mercantilism, as a multidimensional variable, is indicated by the configuration of four elements. The first two comprise dominance of materialist values, which accentuates the value of possessing material goods by a person, and dominance of a mercantile vision of the world. Individuals with a high level of psychological mercantilism will exhibit a mercantile vision of the world, for example with statements underlining the worth of having influential acquaintances or taking up only financially profitable jobs. The next two elements

are dominance of mercantile relations with the world (pure pragmatism characterized by stressing the role of material things in a good life; its opposite is chaste involvement which may mean a diminished appreciation of money and higher appreciation of relationships with people who are close to us), and preferences over the mercantile self-presentation (the “Peacock” presentation, which concerns all people who boast about their goods, stressing the supposed worthiness of their owner).

Subjective assessment of changes related to economic crisis and subjective income assessment

Following the increase of the consumption process and value attributed to the possession of things, the category of materialism has gained a new meaning. Jean Baudrillard [2006] indicates that in the contemporary world, goods hold a sense widely transcending their primary meaning. The psychology of material possessions and collecting examines the issue of possession from the perspective of an individual living in a postindustrial society who creates their own identity, sometimes further defined by material goods [see Górnik-Durose 2002]. From the perspective of mental health of individuals, such a situation may threaten the sense of happiness, mental wellbeing and satisfaction. In this approach, the significant item for an individual is not just possession of goods, but also their quality. In practice, meeting these criteria tends to be extremely difficult, particularly during an economic crisis. Thus, the notion of the *affluenza* has appeared in psychology, defining materialism as the social illness of the 21st century [de Graaf, Wann, Naylor 2005]. The effect of this illness may be a decreasing satisfaction with life, which positively correlates with considering money as the important value [Nickerson, Schwarz, Diener, Kahneman 2003], while the concentration on material assets in an ego-threatening situation lowers the sense of self-value among people with materialistic orientation [Górnik-Durose 2002]. The studies also indicate that focusing on achievement of material goals is related to a lower level of life satisfaction [see Nickerson et al 2003]. Therefore, conducting the analysis on a subjective assessment of changes related to the economic crisis and

a subjective assessment of income was considered valuable, as well as finding whether the gender-related differences are observed in these assessments. Although the economic crisis has been apparent for several years, from the psychological perspective, the significant issue is how persons perceive their material situation, as such perceptions may modify their sense of quality of life and success.

Research problems

The survey concerned the perception of economic crisis, sense of success, level of psychological mercantilism and subjective assessment of income by employed women and men. For the purpose of the studies, a division of employment status with the conception of Mirosława Marody [Marody, Hauser 1999; Marody 2000, 2007] was applied to entrepreneurs, employees of private companies, and employees of state companies.

A general question was posed: whether any significant differences between employed women and men will be observed in respect to economic crisis perception, the sense of success, the level of psychological mercantilism and subjective income assessment. Previous studies indicate, people holding higher positions at work are characterized by a higher level of work satisfaction [Springer 2011]. Therefore, it may be assumed that the entrepreneurs' sense of success will be stronger than in case of employees. In accordance with Marody's conception, the employees in private companies will enjoy more subjective success than employees in state companies. Researchers indicate that gender is significant for the level of earnings, concluding employment contracts, promotion or working full-time [Mandal 2007, Lisowska 2007]; in all cases men hold a privileged position. According to the studies, a successful person is stereotypically a man [Mandal 2007], while in case of a woman successful performance of a complex task is usually explained rather by her luck than her competence [Aronson, Wilson, Akert 1997]. Differences are also observed in self-evaluation: girls undervalue their achievements significantly more compared with boys [Aronson, Wilson, Akert 1997]. It provides a base to assume men will have a greater sense of success, including financially, than women. It should be noted that the above presumptions are partially based on the results of foreign research; therefore intercultural differences may be a significant factor differentiating Polish and

foreign employees. It is worth adding, though, that the conception of Dej, Stephan and Gorgievsky was also verified by the authors in respect to Polish entrepreneurs [Dej 2011a].

The studies also prove that people with materialistic orientation value financial success and power much more than persons preferring family values and striving to achieve warm relationships with others [Zawadzka 2006]. According to Zawadzka, materialistic orientation may be caused by the socialization process of girls and boys. Therefore, it may be assumed that a higher level of psychological mercantilism will be observed among men than among women. Considering the fact that financial motivation may be rather more expected of employers than employees [Szlęzak-Matusiewicz 2011], it may be assumed that they will exhibit the highest level of psychological mercantilism.

Based on the objective data indicating higher earnings of men [Lisowska 2007], it may be concluded that they will have a subjectively higher level of income than women. In that case, the objective data on the level of earnings in different sectors [Sedlak 2014] leads to the assumption that entrepreneurs will declare a subjectively higher level of income than employees will, whereas employees of private companies will declare a higher level than employees of state companies.

According to the Marody's conception, the state sector is characterized by the most stable jobs, so it may be assumed that people employed in state companies will suffer and fear economic crisis to the least extent – although not all surveys confirm these assumptions [Paruzel-Czachura 2013a]. Then, in the private sector, because of the higher average income among entrepreneurs, people conducting business will assess the crisis in a more positive way than employees. At the same time, due to discrimination in the labour market [Mandal 2007; Lisowska 2007], women may feel a stronger fear of crisis and describe a worse situation in crisis.

For the purpose of the survey, the following theses were formed:

- 1) As regards the variable "sense of success", men will achieve higher results compared with women, and entrepreneurs will obtain higher scores compared with employees of private and public companies.
- 2) A higher level of psychological mercantilism will be observed among men and entrepreneurs, while a lower level will be attained by women and employees of public companies.

- 3) Men and entrepreneurs will contribute the highest subjective assessment of income, while women and employees of public companies will provide the lowest.
- 4) Women and employees of private companies will show the greatest fear of crisis, the sense of being in a more difficult situation, while men and employees in public companies will exhibit the lowest fear.

The method

The study was carried out via questionnaire interview method; the data were gathered on-line or with the use of the traditional pencil-paper method.

Participants

A total of 397 economically active people from all Polish voivodships participated in the study (56 questionnaires were rejected because of incomplete answers). The analysed group comprised 179 women and 162 men. The women's average age was 35 years ($SD = 11$); the men's was 39 years ($SD = 11$). The age range in the group was 52 years. In the female group it was 40 years (min = 20, max = 60), while in male – 49 years (min = 23, max = 72). 36.36% of the surveyed were single ($N = 124$), 55.13% – married ($N = 188$), 7.92% constituted divorced persons ($N = 27$), a 0.59% widowers ($N = 2$). Among participants, 64% had tertiary education ($N = 219$), 30% had secondary education ($N = 101$), 3% vocational ($N = 12$), and 3% basic vocational ($N = 9$). Among participants were 104 entrepreneurs (including 51 women), 136 employees of public companies (including 70 women), and 101 employees of private companies (including 58 women). The sample selection was purposeful: entrepreneurs were sought via advertisements in “Panorama Firm”, as well as contacted via telephone, internet or personally. They were also asked to pass the information about the survey to other entrepreneurs and employees. Participants were not selected in a way allowing a description of the sample in respect to the overall population of employees and entrepreneurs, which was taken into account in the interpretation of the results.

Measurement

An anonymous questionnaire method was applied to the study. Among 341 respondents, 118

completed the questionnaire via internet because it allowed faster contact with the respondents from more remote parts of Poland or because of their personal preferences; other respondents completed the paper version of the questionnaire. Data were gathered in 2009 and 2010. Success was measured with the Success Scale (SESS) [Dej 2010; Dej, Stephan, Gorgievsky 2012], while psychological mercantilism with a shortened version *the Questionnaire of Beliefs about the World* [Górnik-Durose 2007].

The **Subjective Entrepreneurial Success Scale SESS** is a tool measuring the level of success perceived by entrepreneurs. Originally, the tool for entrepreneurs comprised 26 testing items examining the company's success, social success, relations with employees and customers, personal financial success, and personal non-financial success. The respondents assessed on two scales the **importance** of a particular criterion/value (e.g. company profitability, private life-work balance, company's actions on behalf of environment). They also assess actual **achievement** of this criterion/value on a five-point scale (from entirely unimportant to very important in the case of a criterion, and from not achieved at all to fully achieved in the case of the achievement of a particular criterion). The sum of results of particular values and their realizations is the indicator of general success. Because the study also included employees in companies, the questions regarding the company's success were changed, so employees assessed the success of the company where they were employed while the entrepreneurs assessed the success of their own companies.

The reliability of the scale was verified with regard to the difference between versions for the groups of employees and entrepreneurs. The questionnaire obtained high reliability for both groups (Employees: $\alpha = 0.87$, Entrepreneurs: $\alpha = 0.93$). Similarly, the two scales proved reliable: Values (Employees: $\alpha = 0.85$, Entrepreneurs: $\alpha = 0.89$) and Achievements (Employees: $\alpha = 0.85$, Entrepreneurs: $\alpha = 0.90$).

Additionally, the respondents were asked to assess the statements: “Generally, I achieved financial success” (in the case of employees) and “Generally, my company achieved financial success” (in the case of entrepreneurs) on a five-point scale (I definitely disagree, I rather disagree, I don't know, I rather agree, I definitely agree). They were also supposed to assess the questions

“Do you believe that other people think that you achieved success?” (total lack of success, slight success, average success, success, significant success). Employees were also asked to evaluate the company’s success referring to the statements: “Generally the company I work for achieved financial success” and answering the question “Do you believe that other people think that your company achieved success?” (Scales of both questions as described above).

The Questionnaire of Beliefs about the World (Version K) examines the level of psychological mercantilism in accordance with the conception of Górnik-Durose [2007]. The version applied in the study measures the level of acceptance of 12 materialistic values assessed on the scale between 0 (not important) and 7 (important) and the character of relations with the world. The respondents assessed, on a scale of 1 (definitely not) and 7 (definitely yes), how strongly they agree with opinions concerning pure pragmatism (e.g. “In order to have an easier life, it is worth knowing influential people”) or chaste involvement (“There is no space in close relationships for cost-benefit analysis”). The objective of the third part of the questionnaire was to find the respondent’s attitude towards persons characterized “Peacock” presentation (e.g. “Often talk how they spend their money”, “They stress in conversation that they are well off”) on a scale of 1 (negative attitude) and 7 (positive attitude).

The questionnaire obtained high reliability of the general scale for mercantilism ($\alpha = 0.87$) and a satisfactory in respect to particular scales: dominance of materialistic values ($\alpha = 0.87$); chaste involvement ($\alpha = 0.64$); pure pragmatism

($\alpha = 0.74$); describing formation of relations with the external world, and mercantile self-presentation ($\alpha = 0.87$).

Moreover, the respondents assessed the level of subjective income in relation to the country’s average (the scale: low, below average, slightly below average, about country’s average, slightly over average, over average, high) and perception of changes related to the economic crisis, which was measured on the five-point Likert scale. The respondents answered the following questions: (a) Has the situation in your company changed due to the present economic crisis? (b) Are you afraid that the situation in your company may worsen because of the present economic crisis?

The results

The comparison between women and men by employment status was carried out using the STATISTICA PL 10 program with the nonparametric Kruskal-Wallis ANOVA test and post-hoc test of multiple mean rank comparisons, as the assumptions¹ for application of the parametric equivalent – variance analysis – were not met. The p-value level indicating the significance of differences between particular groups was specified in each comparison in brackets with the r value, which is a measure of effect size². The figures present medians and quartile ranges of variables in particular groups.

In the case of success, groups could be specified according to the importance of personal values/criteria of success, personal financial success (additional questions) and assessment of success by others (additional question). Men entrepreneurs consider these

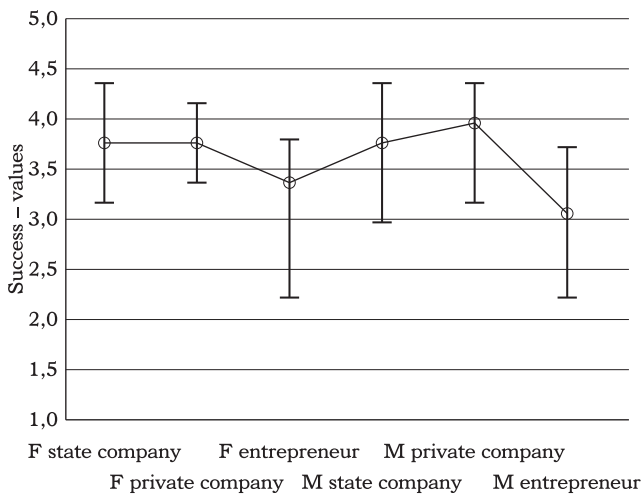
Table 1. Personal success in groups specified by sex and employment status Kruskal-Wallis ANOVA: $H(5) = 213.287$, $p = 0.000$, $E_r^2 = 0.627$ – values with the p-value level and effect size

Groups	Entrepreneurs					
	Women			Men		
	z	p	r	z	p	r
Women – state companies	10.010	0.000	0.910	9.964	0.000	0.898
Men – state companies	8.657	0.000	0.800	8.596	0.000	0.788
Women – private companies	8.325	0.000	0.797	8.260	0.000	0.784
Men – private companies	8.891	0.000	0.917	8.830	0.000	0.901

Source: own elaboration

values to be lesser compared with women employed in companies (state: $p = 0.004$, $r = 0.329$; private, $p = 0.004$, $r = 0.347$) and men from private companies ($p = 0.005$, $r = 0.364$). A difference between men entrepreneurs and men employed in state companies may be also observed ($p = 0.036$, $r = 0.279$).

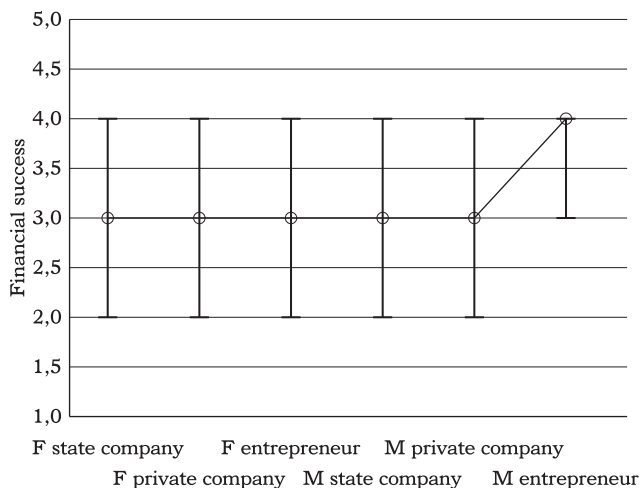
Figure 1. Personal values in groups specified by sex and employment status. Kruskal-Wallis ANOVA $H(5) = 25.620$, $p = 0.000$, $E_R^2 = .075$



Source: own elaboration

Men entrepreneurs achieve a higher level of personal financial success than women employed in state ($p = 0.013$, $r = 0.299$) and private companies ($p = 0.038$, $r = 0.286$) and men employed in state companies ($p = 0.010$, $r = 0.313$).

Figure 2. Financial success in groups specified by sex and employment status. ANOVA Kruskal-Wallis: $H(5) = 17.584$, $p = 0.004$, $E_R^2 = 0.052$

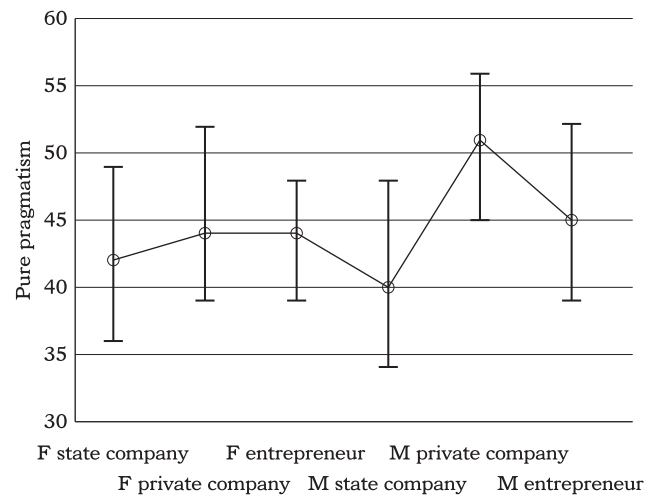


Source: own elaboration

Women and men entrepreneurs estimate more highly the assessment of personal success by others than respondents from other groups, although the difference is marginal. All surveyed men believe more often that other people evaluate their success more highly ($U = 12377$, $Z = -2.334$, $p = 0.015$, $r_g = -0.146$). The assumptions that men entrepreneurs will have a stronger perception of the higher level not only of financial but of personal success, compared with other groups, were not confirmed by the results. The analysis indicated a reverse phenomenon: the lowest assessment of men entrepreneurs was given to values related to success.

The analyses on the level of mercantilism indicated that men employed in private companies are characterized by a higher level of pure pragmatism than employees of state companies (women: $p = 0.000$, $r = 0.387$; men: $p = 0.000$, $r = 0.464$).

Figure 3. The level of pure pragmatism in groups specified by sex and employment status. Kruskal-Wallis ANOVA: $H(5) = 26.486$, $p = 0.000$, $E_R^2 = 0.078$

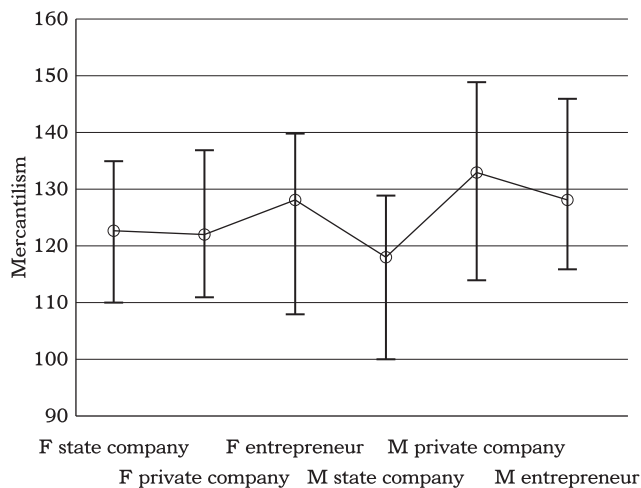


Source: own elaboration

In turn, men employed in state companies display a lower level of mercantilism compared with men from private companies ($p = 0.005$, $r = 0.343$), while compared with men entrepreneurs, a difference in mercantilism is observed only at the tendency level ($p = 0.040$, $r = 0.275$).

No significant differences were observed between women and men as regards the level of psychological mercantilism; significant differences concerned only with private and state employees. Nevertheless, the study showed that the higher level of chaste involvement – which is the antithesis of pure pragmatism

Figure 4. Psychological mercantilism in groups specified by sex and employment status. Kruskal-Wallis ANOVA: $H(5) = 16.760$ $p = 0.005$, $E_R^2 = 0.049$

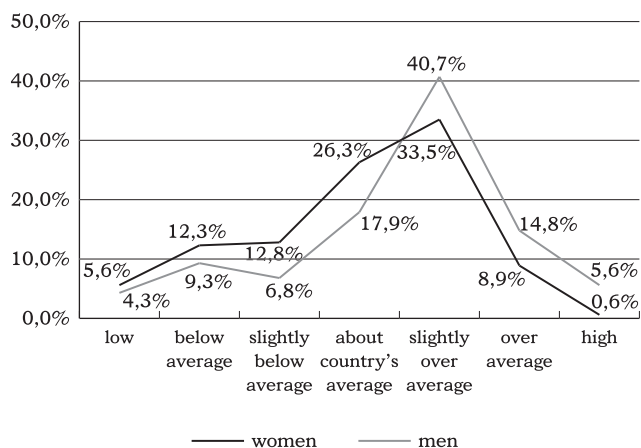


Source: own elaboration

characteristic for people with a high level of mercantilism – was observed among women ($U = 12502$, $Z = 2.196$, $p = 0.028$, $r_g = 0.138$). Therefore, there are no differences in the overall result of psychological mercantilism between women and men, but these groups have a different level of chaste involvement (one of the scales of psychological mercantilism, in which high scores indicate a low level of mercantilism).

The results revealed significant differences between women and men in assessment of subjective income ($U = 11315.5$, $Z = -3.418$, $p = 0.000$, $r_g = -0.215^3$). Men declared higher subjective income. More often than women, they consider their earnings as higher than average or high.

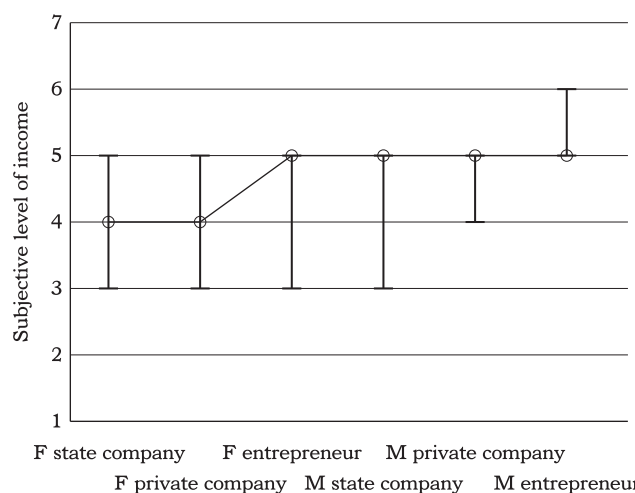
Figure 5. Subjective level of income among women and men – percentage shares of women and men in particular categories of answers



Source: own elaboration.

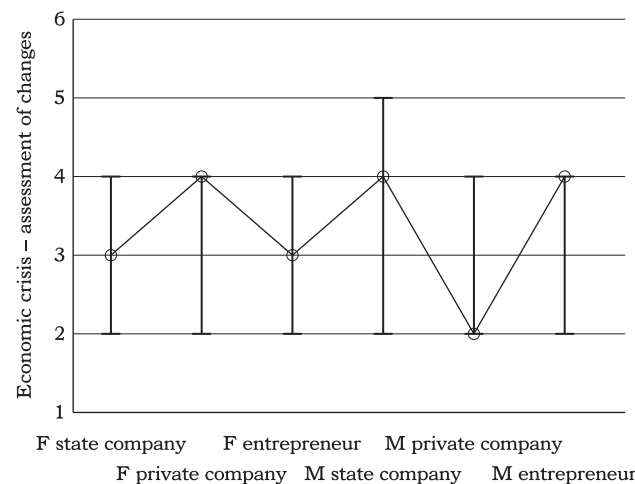
The anticipated differences between all economically active groups were not observed in the outcome of the studies. It was only shown that men entrepreneurs declare a higher level of subjective income than employees of state companies (women: $p = 0.000$, $r = 0.462$; men: $p = 0.024$, $r = 0.290$) and women from private companies ($p = 0.000$, $r = 0.381$).

Figure 6. Assessment of subjective level of income groups specified by sex and employment status. ANOVA Kruskal-Wallis: $H(5) = 30.906$ $p = 0.000$, $E_R^2 = 0.091$



Source: own elaboration

Figure 7. Assessment of economic crisis in groups specified by sex and employment status ANOVA Kruskal-Wallis: $H(5) = 15.946$, $p = 0.007$, $E_R^2 = 0.047$

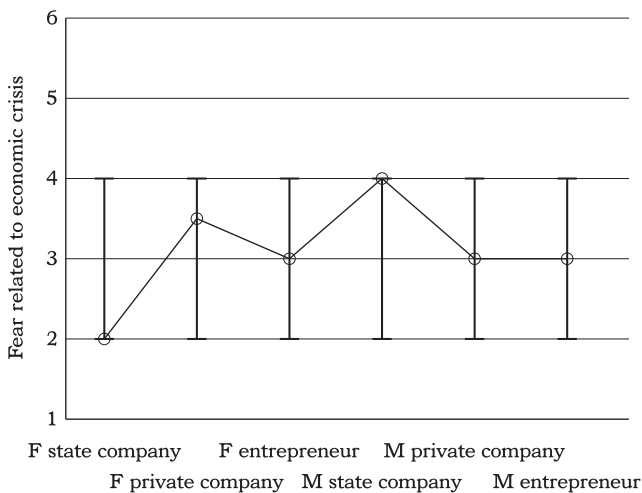


Source: own elaboration.

The data concerning assessment of the crisis turned out to be the most surprising, as they indicated that neither the public sector nor the male sex are as privileged as it was theoretically assumed. The results show that men employed in state companies more highly assess changes related to the economic crisis than women employed in state companies ($p = 0.025$, $r = 0.270$) or men from private companies ($p = 0.047$, $r = 0.283$). It means that they are more dissatisfied with the crisis.

Women in state companies exhibit a lower level of fear related to the economic crisis than men in state companies ($p = 0.006$, $r = 0.305$) and women in private firms ($p = 0.023$, $r = 0.280$).

Figure 8. Assessment of fear of economic crisis in groups specified by sex and employment status. ANOVA Kruskal-Wallis: $H(5) = 17.399$, $p = 0.004$, $E_R^2 = 0.051$



Source: own elaboration

Discussion

The analysis of the results showed that surveyed women exhibit a high level of chaste involvement, which indicates a different way for each sex of entering relationships with others. The factor of chaste involvement in a female group is characterized by a lower attachment to money. This finding is consistent with the conclusion that surveyed men declare a higher level of subjective income, and if they are entrepreneurs, it also refers to financial success. These men also believe that they are perceived as people who achieved success. The data may indicate general tendencies that despite the growing role

of consumption and material goods in the contemporary world, women and men do not really live in the same worlds. However, further studies on a representative and larger sample should be conducted, which would unambiguously determine the scale of this phenomenon. It is possible that the so-called *affluenza* touches women and men to a different extent [de Graaf, Wann, Naylor 2005]. The surveyed women more often are oriented toward relationships with other people, while men dwell on financial aspects. Therefore, the data seem to indicate that from this perspective, women have a privileged position, considering the results of studies on the role of material aspects in positive psychology [Linley, Joseph 2007].

The study showed that surveyed men from state companies, and not people from the private sector, are those who mostly suffer financial crisis. Obviously in the era of crisis, the development of the private sector, in the opinion of participants, is very good, while the problems are not perceived particularly by surveyed entrepreneurs. Female respondents from state companies felt the most secure, which may be the effect of having an employment contract for unlimited duration and the possibility to take advantage of social provisions such as child-care leave. The reasons for such *status quo* may be found in the transformations taking place in the public sector, where employment stability is constantly declining while earnings, despite the objective increase in the prices of goods in the Polish market, do not change significantly. Probably also significant is the subjective demand for income, which is likely to be higher among men; thus they more strongly feel the changes connected with the economic crisis. On the other hand, the surveyed women in state companies are the ones who have the greatest fear of future changes (compared with male respondents employed in state companies); therefore their position is not so privileged. It is possible that people employed in the public sector are more exposed to subjectively felt problems in respect to the crisis; men are rather dissatisfied with the current situation, while women are more concerned about their future. The data are consistent with the higher assessment of their income by men entrepreneurs, compared with the surveyed men from the public sector and surveyed women from private companies, and also from the fact that the lowest level of average monthly earnings is observed for women in state companies [national survey on earnings conducted in 2013 by Sedlak & Sedlak: Tryka 2014; Sedlak 2014; Wrona 2014].

It was also indicated that surveyed men from private companies are characterized by a higher level of mercantilism (compared with surveyed men from state companies) and pure pragmatism (compared with female and male respondents from the public sector). It means that this group displays a higher desire to achieve benefits, including those from a performed occupation, during a crisis. Also worth notice is that surveyed men from state companies have the lowest level of mercantilism among all groups of men. It seems that even the choice of a job in a public enterprise indicates that material aspects are placed at the bottom of the hierarchy of values. The determinants of such *status quo* may vary, beginning from personal characteristics to environmental or situational ones. An important question emerges: what additional features distinguish men from the public and private sector, and are these features the effect of, or the reason for, the jobs performed by respondents? The answer to this question might be facilitated by qualitative studies concerning motives for taking up a particular job.

The surveyed male entrepreneurs considered the importance of the value of success as less significant, compared with female respondents from state and private companies, and men from private companies. But they have higher results in perception of financial success, compared with surveyed women from both public and private companies as well as men from public companies, or assessment of success by others. It means that achievement of declared values was more important for them than the values themselves, possibly because they are more conditioned towards realization of the goals they have set for themselves. The ratings of success perception by others were similarly high in the case of women conducting their own businesses. The fact that surveyed entrepreneurs, regardless of their sex, have a stronger sense of this success compared with all other surveyed groups is significant. Thus, a positive picture emerges of the entrepreneur in Poland, or at least the company owners who completed the questionnaire perceive themselves as such. This is definitely significant for their subjective sense of quality of life. Further studies should be carried out in order to verify and extend conclusions drawn from this analysis.

Taking into the account the study results, the question of whether feminine and masculine business worlds really exist cannot be univocally answered. Nevertheless, the obtained data seem to suggest such a possibility. It concerns not only the

objective indicators such as the level of earnings, but also the subjective sense of success, the attitude to material goods, and the assessment of the economic crisis. It is difficult to unambiguously suggest which of the surveyed labour market categories is the most privileged one. Women “win” in respect to some factors, while other factors are more favorable to men.

- ¹ Lack of distribution normality and variance homogeneity.
- ² Coefficient of effect size r (Rosenthal 1991, after: Field 2009).
- ³ Glass rank coefficient of two-series correlation (King, Minium 2009).

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