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## **Corporate culture studies of Polish manufacture companies.**

### **The culture as an independent variable.**

#### **Abstract**

The main aim of this paper is to present the selected results of our research that relate to corporate culture of Polish manufacture companies. We based on the idea employed by Trompenaars and Humpden – Turner in their cross national research of corporate culture. In our study we investigated cultural differences between manufactures located in four cities in Poland – Warsaw, Lodz, Poznan and Rzeszow. We were also interested in differences between values and norms that relate to private life and professional life. We completed our research in 55 production companies by using questionnaires that encompassed 440 managers of top and middle level.

#### **Corporate culture studies**

The studies of corporate culture are usually aimed to investigate both official and not official face of organization. Scientists are interested in diagnosis of human interactions that, just like fingerprints, are unique and typical for specific organization. In literature the exist many standpoints that relate to methods of corporate culture research. Each methods has its warm followers and opponents. Some critics of using questionnaires in corporate culture studies state that *“the use of survey methodology is seen by many current scholars of culture as being too much the product of social scientist’s rather than the participant’s point of view and therefore inappropriate as method for measuring culture”* (Hofstede 1998: 479). However there is also widely represented point of view that results of participant observation as a popular qualitative method of organizational culture studies can be biased because of hard to control emotions (Arnould 1998: 73) lack of proper objectivism in the process of data interpretation and collection (Doktór 1964: 49; Shaughnessy et. al.: 107-108) or unable to control influence of researcher on observed individuals and vice versa (Babbie 2003: 313; Frankford-Nachmias 2001: 302, Chomeczynski 2006: 71).

Gerd Hofstede concludes that “*a prudent middle way is to say that organizational culture should neither be studied solely by case studies nor solely by questionnaires*” (Hofstede 1998: 479). It is also reasonable the voice of those who use the methodology of grounded theory that assumes the use of different methods in study of one specific social phenomenon (Denzin 1978, Konecki 2000). It gives us opportunity to verify some obtained data and look at it from different perspectives.

Despite of many standpoints on methods used in studies of corporate culture we can also distinguish at least three<sup>1</sup> ways of its conceptual perception present in literature. Linda Smircich (1983) indicates that a corporate culture is treated by researchers as:

*independent variable.* In this concept culture “*is imported into the organization through the membership*” and social scientists examine “*managerial and employee practices across countries*” (1983: 343). In famous cross national research conducted by Trompenaars and Hampden – Turner also by Hofstede there was adopted the concept of corporate culture as the independent variable that is influenced by national culture (see also Dastmalchian, Lee, Ng 2000).

*dependent variable.* Followers of this standpoint used to perceive organizational culture as result of “*structure, size, technology and leadership patterns*” that characterize company” (Smircich 1983: 344, Konecki 2002: 117-119). Wilkins and Ouchi in their study investigated relation between the culture of corporate and its performance (Wilkins, Ouchi 1989).

*internal “variable”.* Within this conception a corporate culture is treated as an autonomic phenomenon that is unique for some specific organization and is independent neither from national culture nor internal determinants mentioned above (see Konecki: 2002: 119). Smircich claims that scientists that share this standpoint (Morgan 1997) “*leave behind the view that a culture is something an organization has, in favor of the view that a culture is something organization is*” (Smircich 1981).

In this paper we adopted the first concept of corporate culture research so we treat organizational culture as an independent variable. We examined differences between cultures of companies located in different cities (Lodz, Warsaw, Poznan, Rzeszow) to investigate the relation between region and corporate culture.

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<sup>1</sup> Of course there are many more standpoints but because limited size of this paper we can not present it here.

## The methodology

The research<sup>2</sup> was carried among 55 production companies. In each of them were employed over 100 employees. Study encompassed four large cities: Warsaw, Lodz, Rzeszow and Poznan. The target sample were high level managers and directors of human resources in companies under study. We used the 10 + 1 model, what means that in each company we engaged in study 10 managers and 1 HR director. In this paper we discuss only findings that base upon information delivered by managers, because they were asked questions that are compatible with those used in Japanese questionnaire. Our study base on 451 questionnaires. We used the quota and random sample. The quota method was used to represent such categories like: company size, private and state ownership and with Polish or foreign capital. The table below shows it in details. The random sample gave us opportunity to generalize to some extent our findings.

**Table 1** Types of companies under study (percentages relates to the number of questionnaires from each company)

Variables		Total	Warsaw	Lodz	Poznan	Rzeszow
State or private company	State company (%)	27,1	29,2	45,2	5,1	22,5
	Count	119	40	56	5	18
	Private company (%)	72,9	70,8	54,8	94,9	77,5
	Count	320	97	68	93	62
	Total count	439 <sup>3</sup>	137	124	102	88
State or foreign capital	State capital (%)	74,9	76,6	83,1	52	86,9
	Count	332	105	103	51	73
	Foreign capital (%)	25,1	23,4	16,9	48	13,1
	Count	111	32	21	47	11
	Total count	443	137	124	102	88

## The questionnaire

Our findings presented here base on three groups of questions that relate to private (table 2) and professional (table 3) sphere of our respondents' lives and their opinions about conditions that play an important role in taking over managerial posts (table 4).

The questions from tables 2 and 3 we grouped to five major aggregative categories that to some extent correspond with categories created by Humpden – Turner and Trompenaars in their book entitled *The Seven Cultures of Capitalism*. In our research we

<sup>2</sup> The director of research is Prof. Krzysztof T. Konecki

<sup>3</sup> The numbers lower than 451 are the consequences of lack of data.

distinguished such categories (variables):

1) **Universalism versus Particularism** (Do managers obey some universal rules in their professional and private activity or each decision is exceptional and is made independently from rules?) - variable UNIVERSALISM1 or UNIVERSALISM2<sup>4</sup>.

2) **Analyzing vs. Integrating** (Do managers divide each problem to particular elements or rather think in holistic way and integrate elements to one entity?) – variable INTEGRATING1/ INTEGRATING2

3) **Individualism vs. Communitarianism** (Do managers find more important an individual and respect his/her goals, rights etc. or do they support a group and its interests supremacy over an individual?) – variable INDYVIDUALISM1/ INDYVIDUALISM2

4) **Equality vs. Hierarchy** (Is there more popular treating each person equally independently from his/her position or rather to pay attention on his/her hierarchy and position?) - variable HIERARCHY1/ HIERARCHY2

5) **Net** is defined here as using contacts (private, family etc.) to achieve a goal in case of private sphere (variable NET1). In the professional sphere the variable NET2 is connected with actions that base on close relationships between the stuff of company.

The categories presented above aggregate answers for particular questions that they are consisted of. These questions are grouped in the table 2 that relates to private sphere and the table 3 that is connected with the professional activity.

**Table 2** How much do you agree with statements below? (1- strongly disagree, 2 – disagree, 3 undecided, 4 - agree, 5 – strongly disagree)

a) If I have any problem I can count on my neighbors	1 2 3 4 5
b) It is important for me to stay in harmony with myself and the others	1 2 3 4 5
c) When somebody occupies the higher organizational position is the enough reason to respect him	1 2 3 4 5
d) Polish citizenship is not enough to be a Pole	1 2 3 4 5
e) Daily situations are usually so different and exceptional, that some universal rules are useless, and do not stick to them	1 2 3 4 5
f) Using private contacts to do some business is not fair	1 2 3 4 5
g) Polish companies that are in trouble should have right to be treated respectively by the state	1 2 3 4 5
h) If the child of my good friend's was looking for fob I would help	1 2 3 4 5
i) To deal with some difficult problem it is necessary to treat it in holistic	1 2 3 4 5

<sup>4</sup> According to Table 1 or 2 respectively

way and look for most general solutions	
j) Even adult children should totally respect their parents	1 2 3 4 5
k) I will never accept the situation when my professional career dominate my family sphere	1 2 3 4 5
l) Selling polish companies to foreign investors is contradict to the interest of polish state	1 2 3 4 5
m) It is important to follow commonly accepted rules in life	1 2 3 4 5
n) Decisions of my city authorities should be respected by event those groups or communities that their interests are opposite to these decisions	1 2 3 4 5
o) To help my friends I agree to meet them halfway in situations not precisely regulated by the law	1 2 3 4 5
p) One of the children should take over the family business from his/her father.	1 2 3 4 5
r) Employing relatives by a person with high position in organization is not wrong	1 2 3 4 5
s) It was always important for me to find some major goal or aim, to which my all other goals would be subordinated.	1 2 3 4 5
t) Each problem can be solved if you know and use proper rules	1 2 3 4 5
u) Inhabitants of my housing estate resolve problems commonly and do not engage local authorities	1 2 3 4 5
w) It is important that manager should be older than his/her subordinates	1 2 3 4 5
x) To gain a job it is important to have private connections and contacts	1 2 3 4 5

**Table 3.** How much do you agree with statements below? (1- strongly disagree, 2 – disagree, 3 undecided, 4 - agree, 5 – strongly disagree)

All the conflicts in our company are solved only by management	1 2 3 4 5
It is important for our company to have good relations with local community	1 2 3 4 5
We especially appreciate those employees who have no problems with new or not typical tasks	1 2 3 4 5
Everybody in our company knows that the basis for his/her assessment are concrete facts and indicators that relate to their individual effectiveness	1 2 3 4 5
Engaging new persons recommended by our employees is the good and used in our company procedure of recruitment	1 2 3 4 5
If we have to deal with some sophisticated problem people in different position in organizational hierarchy work together as partners	1 2 3 4 5
It is thought in my company that close and warm relationships that turn our team to family are good for company	1 2 3 4 5
The mutual loyalty in relations of superiors and subordinates is thought important in my company	1 2 3 4 5
Before we punish some employee for his mistake we take into account all circumstances including his/her life situation	1 2 3 4 5
All the basis knowledge about our company we can present by numbers, tables and diagrams	1 2 3 4 5
It is thought in our company that teams that base on friendships of their members are very effective	1 2 3 4 5
Following procedures known by all employees is the basis of our company	1 2 3 4 5

activity	
Making assessments of our employees we take into account also their family situation	1 2 3 4 5
In our company the problems that seem to relate only to the specific department are solved in cooperation with other departments	1 2 3 4 5
The prestige of our employee base not on his position in organizational hierarchy but on his competences	1 2 3 4 5
We try to preserve each employee development of his/her qualifications	1 2 3 4 5
In our company we are trying to sustain contact also with families of our employees	1 2 3 4 5
Our company is known for its charity activity	1 2 3 4 5
In our company we expect from our employees total engagement, sometimes at his/her family expense	1 2 3 4 5
We favor employees, who engage in work for company in their free time	1 2 3 4 5
Salaries are differentiated and dependent on individual efforts	1 2 3 4 5
We found important the identification of our employees with company	1 2 3 4 5
Problems company-inhabitants of local community should be solved commonly	1 2 3 4 5

**Table 4.** What matters in taking over managerial posts?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
a) family connections					
b) political connections					
c) private connections					
d) qualifications					
e) work experience					
f) education					

## The results

As we mentioned, the questions in the tables 2 and 3 we categorized to five groups. Each of them has different range (distance between minimum and maximum<sup>5</sup> values of particular variables). Below we present ranges for each aggregative variables:

UNIVERSALISM1 (8 - 40)

NET1 (5 - 25)

INTEGRATING1 (3 - 15)

HIERARCHY1 (3 - 15)

COMMUNITARIANISM1 (3 – 15)

The results presented below in the table 4 show means and standard deviations of particular aggregative variables. Basing on this we can say about some tendencies that we observe among respondents. When we look at variable UNIVERSALISM1 we can assume that generally respondents locate themselves rather in the middle (the middle is exactly 24 points) on the dichotomy universalism vs. particularism with little accent on universal tendency. The low mean scores (9,6) relating to variable NET1 let us come to conclusion that respondents declare low level of “net behaviors”. Actually, the responses may indicate that managers do not support overusing private contacts to achieve a specific goal. This outcome may be also the consequence of the polish culture. Using private contacts to do some business (employing relatives etc.) seems to be an object of social condemnation as the case of unfair behavior. The mean scores of variable INTEGRATING1 (11,7) let us to assume that respondents emphasize values rather connected with integration than analyzing. It may indicate that they prefer holistic way of dealing with problems than analyzing particular elements which they are consisted of. The interesting is result of the next variable that relates to the dilemma equality vs. hierarchy (HIERARCHY1). The relatively low mean (8,5) gives us opportunity to say that respondents rather identify themselves with equality than hierarchy. Of course we have to be conscious of the fact that the answers relate to declared values that can be even opposite to the held values. The last variable INDYVID1 is connected with dilemma individualism vs. communitarianism. The outcome 10,3 represent tendency just in the middle between individualism and communitarianism.

**Table 5.** Mean values of aggregative variables.

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<sup>5</sup> The lower value the less intense one tendency and the stronger the second from each pair. For example low scores on UNIVERSALISM1 means also high scores on particularism etc.

		UNIVERSALISM1	NET1	INTEGRATING1	HIERARCHY1	INDYVID1
N	Valid	440	450	448	451	442
	Missing	11	1	3	0	9
Mean		29,8114	9,5956	11,6897	8,4701	10,3167
Std. Deviation		3,9855	2,1296	1,8573	2,1147	1,8342

The results presented above we can also analyze including the city that respondents come from as the independent variable. In the table 6 we have mean scores for each aggregative variables that relate to the city.

**Table 6.** Mean values of aggregative variables including the city division.

CITY		UNIVERSALISM1	NET1	INTEGRATING1	HIERARCHY1	INDYVID1
Warszawa	Mean	29,8963	9,2920	11,7518	8,3285	10,1985
	N	135	137	137	137	136
	Std. Deviation	3,9366	2,1391	1,9012	2,3267	1,9695
Lodz	Mean	29,6250	9,6452	11,6612	8,6210	10,1597
	N	120	124	121	124	119
	Std. Deviation	4,0419	2,1421	1,9303	2,1053	1,8039
Poznan	Mean	30,6566	9,8614	11,6275	8,5098	10,6667
	N	99	101	102	102	99
	Std. Deviation	3,8576	2,1773	1,9084	2,1236	1,7321
Rzeszow	Mean	28,9651	9,6932	11,7045	8,4318	10,3182
	N	86	88	88	88	88
	Std. Deviation	3,9954	2,0192	1,6411	1,7603	1,7456
Total	Mean	29,8114	9,5956	11,6897	8,4701	10,3167
	N	440	450	448	451	442
	Std. Deviation	3,9855	2,1296	1,8573	2,1147	1,8342

The results from the table 6 let us come to conclusion that the aggregative variables do not depend from the city defined here as an independent variable. Respondents from Warszawa, Lodz, Poznan and Rzeszow presented very similar standpoint. Test One Way ANOVA test confirmed our findings.

Now we will compare the variables from table 2 in questionnaire that relate to norms and values connected with the private sphere with the variables from table 3 that indicate norms and values held by our respondents in their professional lives. Below as previously, we present ranges for each aggregative variables:

UNIVERSALISM2 (3 - 15)

NET2 (5 - 25)

INTEGRATING2 (3 - 15)

HIERARCHY2 (5 - 25)

COMMUNITARIANISM2 (7 – 35)

**Table 7.** Mean values of aggregative variables.

		UNIVERSALISM2	NET2	INTEGRATING2	HIERARCHY2	INDYVID2
N	Valid	450	443	450	447	444
	Missing	1	8	1	4	7
Mean		8,3556	16,2777	8,7933	13,1074	24,9347
Std. Deviation		1,7500	3,1612	1,7969	2,4608	3,1975

The outcome relating to the variable UNIVERSALISM2 is very similar to result that relates to the variable UNIVERSALISM1. Mean 8,35 locate our respondents near the middle of dilemma universalism vs. particularism. The visible difference is in the case of variable NET2. When we make comparison the variable NET1 (9,6) with NET2 (16,3) we can observe significant change. In business the ‘net’ is probably assumed as positive because it makes a company activity more effective. Respondents admit to accent close relationships between employees within team that embodies to some extent a family. They also find important to maintain contacts with employees’ families. We can also observe some significant difference between variable INTEGRATING1 and INTEGRATING2. In the first case (11,7) respondents emphasized more holistic standpoint than in the second one (8,8). We may assume that in business sphere they represent more analytical way of dealing with problems. Maybe this way of thinking is required in doing professional business. When we look at variables that relate to hierarchy (HIERARCHY1 and HIERARCHY2) we can see no significant difference (respectively 8,47 – range 3-15 and 13,1 - range 5-25). Respondents, both in case of questions connected to the private sphere and the professional activity located

themselves closer equality than hierarchy. The mean scores (25) of last variable (INDYVID2) related to the dilemma individualism vs. communitarianism indicates that respondents are closer to the second part of dilemma than the first one. The results in case of the professional activity are also to some extent different from the results connected with private sphere. It may indicate that in business some collective actions are more popular than in private sphere.

The results presented above we can also analyze including the city that respondents come from as the independent variable. In the table 8 we have mean scores for each aggregative variables that relate to the city.

**Table 8.** Mean values of aggregative variables including the city division.

MIASTO		UNIVERSALISM2	NET2	INTEGRATING2	HIERARCHY2	INDYVID2
Warszawa	Mean	8,1825	16,8120	8,7372	12,7500	25,1805
	N	137	133	137	136	133
	Std. Deviation	1,7666	3,3397	1,9676	2,3054	2,9228
Lodz	Mean	8,5041	14,7190	8,8618	13,6667	24,2377
	N	123	121	123	123	122
	Std. Deviation	1,5908	3,2229	1,7802	2,8188	3,5397
Poznan	Mean	8,2647	16,3069	8,8137	13,3168	25,2157
	N	102	101	102	101	102
	Std. Deviation	1,8451	2,5719	1,6812	2,4205	3,2749
Rzeszow	Mean	8,5227	17,5795	8,7614	12,6322	25,2069
	N	88	88	88	87	87
	Std. Deviation	1,8193	2,5267	1,6951	2,0123	2,8940
Total	Mean	8,3556	16,2777	8,7933	13,1074	24,9347
	N	450	443	450	447	444
	Std. Deviation	1,7500	3,1612	1,7969	2,4608	3,1975

The results presented in the table 8 indicate lack of significant differences when we take into account the city as the independent variable. Only in Lodz the mean that relates to variable NET2 is slightly lower than in the other cities.

In the table 9 there are presented answers for questions shown in table 4. They relate to opinions about conditions that lie under taking over managerial posts. The table below presents results in percentage.

**Table 9.** Answers (in percentage) on question: What matters in taking over managerial posts?

Answers (strongly agree and agree together) in percentage	Total	Warsaw	Lodz	Poznan	Rzeszow
Family connections	53,1	45,6	<b>65,6</b>	50	36,6
Political connections	70,8	61,7	<b>84,5</b>	47,1	68,2
Private connections	88,1	84,5	<b>96,8</b>	86,2	80,5
Qualifications	67,6	79,3	54,5	<b>83,4</b>	73,6
Work experience	70	<b>80,1</b>	60,2	79,4	67,8
Education	72,8	75,7	65,9	<b>84,4</b>	76,7

As we can see the most respondents from Lodz generally agree with the opinion that family, political and private connections play important role in taking over managerial posts. On the other side seems to be Poznan. In this case managers identified themselves with opinion that categories, such as: qualifications, work experience and education play major role in taking over managerial positions.

Below, in the table 10 we joined three first categories (family, political and private connections) and named it net dimension<sup>6</sup>. The last three categories (qualifications, work experience and education) we named together as meritocratic dimension. We can see average values (mean and standard deviation) of these two dimensions (net and meritocratic) dependent on the city.

**Table 10.** Means of the net and the meritocratic aggregative variables.

The net and the meritocratic dimensions	Total	Warsaw	Lodz	Poznan	Rzeszow
Meritocratic dimension					
Mean	11,1	10,7	<b>12</b>	10,6	11
Standard deviation	2,5	2,8	2	2,6	2,6
Minimum	3	3	6	3	3
Maximum	15	15	15	15	15
Net dimension					
Mean	11,6	11,7	11	<b>12,2</b>	11,6
Standard deviation	2,3	2,2	2,3	2,6	2,4
Minimum	4	6	5	5	4
Maximum	15	15	15	15	15

<sup>6</sup> These two aggregative variables are the sum of particular categories.

The results presented above confirm our earlier conclusions according to Lodz and Poznan. These cities differ from each other but the difference is not huge enough to draw some strong conclusions. There are also visible little values of standard deviation what let us to assume that the answers were rather statistically homogeneous.

### **Final conclusions**

As we can see there are no clear and undoubted differences between opinions of respondents from different cities. It means that there are probably no cultural differences between regions that would influent differences between corporate culture of analyzed companies. There is strong probability that there is no cultural differences between regions at all or that business requires some universal way of thinking and perceiving of reality. Maybe managers perceive their professional and private life in the same way no matter what city they come from. The argument that supports this conclusion is that our further analyzes indicated also no differences between men and women in their managerial performances. Their answers were similar in all aspects encompassed by our study. These results let us come to conclusion that probably managerial posts<sup>7</sup> require some set of qualifications and personal traits that are rather homogenous and independent from city, sex or age.

However, we could find differences between dimensions that related to private and professional sphere of activity. The most visible discrepancy between those two spheres were in “net dimension”. In business the “net” level is relatively strong what can be probably assumed as positive because it makes a company activity more effective. Respondents admitted to support close relationships between employees within team that embodies to some extent a family relations. According to private life the net dimension was relatively weak in comparison to the professional activity.

### **Discussion**

In this study our intention was to investigate some local culture differences within country and their possible influence on corporate cultures. Despite of the fact that no differences occurred in companies encompassed by research we believe in importance of studies concentrated on conditions that base on organizations performance because of heir applicable results. Such studies deliver important information that could be useful for those

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<sup>7</sup> Of course our conclusions relate only to Poland.

who want to establish some business relations in specific country. Many cross national companies experience severe difficulties because of lack of understanding by top management the cultural background of countries that they are located.

Moreover we see the huge need for conducting research that base on three theoretical conceptions mentioned above. Corporate culture is the phenomenon sophisticated enough to use different standpoints in the same research. It increases our chances to better understand changes in functioning of contemporary organizations.

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