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## A sense of success, perception of economic crisis and the form of occupational activity

*The studies presented attempt to outline a relationship between a feeling of success, the perception of economic crisis and the form of occupational activity. The article shows the results of empirical research conducted among 341 economically active people and concerns the psychological differences between them in Poland. The theoretical basis of the research is the new model of success by Dej, Stephan, Gorgievsky (2009). This research has proven the existence of significant statistical differences in a sense of success between entrepreneurs, employees in private companies, and employees in state-owned companies, but there are no differences in perception of economic crisis. People who scored a high general result in a feeling of success perceive economic crisis as harmless ( $r = .238$ ). The results show that being an entrepreneur is the most beneficial activity from a mental health standpoint.*

**Keywords:** Success, occupational activity, entrepreneur success, employee success

### Introduction

It is in vogue to be successful in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. An important aspect of people's lives is an aspiration to obtain material possessions, have a "happy" family or social prestige. As Małgorzata Chrupała (2000) pointed out, contemporary success does not only bring financial benefits and enable one to move up in the power hierarchy, but also stimulates entrepreneurship, makes it possible to overcome obstacles, triggers joy and satisfaction, increases the level of self-acceptance and has a favorable impact on mental health. Zbigniew Skorny (1993) speaks in that respect of the positive regulatory function of success, which mainly consists of stimulating activity, makes one feel better and makes it possible to stay sane. Joy Peluchette (1993) emphasizes, on the other hand, that success is connected with mental well-being, happiness and quality of life. Success therefore has an immense significance for our entire life, including its professional part.

The purpose of this paper is to present the results of empirical research related to the sense of success among Polish entrepreneurs, employees of private businesses and of state-owned companies. The survey group was formed on the basis of the concept developed by the Polish sociologist Mirosława Marody (1999, 2000, 2007). One of the most interesting multidimensional models of success was chosen for the research, developed by Dominika Dej, Ute Stephan and Marian Gorgievsky from the

Technical University of Dresden and the Erasmus University of Rotterdam (2007, 2008, 2009). It is assumed in this work that successful people maintain harmony in all aspects of their lives, caring both about their professional career and about their health or relationships with other people. Successful people are those who have found fulfilment in all the most important areas of their lives (cf. Rauch, Frese, 2000).

### Entrepreneur's success model by Dominika Dej, Ute Stephan and Marian Gorgievsky

This conceptualization concerns success achieved by entrepreneurs that has been extended for purposes of empirical research and applied to employees. Dej, Stephan and Gorgievsky point out that the achieved success can be judged from both the objective and subjective point of view (cf. Combs et al., 2005 after: Dej, 2008; Venkatraman, Ramanujam, 1986). Objective criteria usually relate to economic factors such as profit, turnover of the business, increase of the number of employees, or innovation (cf. Steers, 1975 after: Dej, 2008; Kaplan, 1983; Venkatraman, Ramanujam, 1986; Gupta, 1987 after: Dej, 2008; Randolph, Sapienza, Watson, 1991 after: Dej, 2008; Chandler, Hanks, 1993; Murphy, 1996; Schenk, 1998). Subjective ones, on the other hand, comprise satisfaction or achievement of personal as well as business-related goals (cf. Kurtako, 1997; Schenk, 1998; Orser, 2005, 2006 after: Dej, 2008). Arnold C. Cooper and Kendall

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W. Artz claim that subjective criteria can be better predictors of entrepreneur's future decisions and behavior than objective economic and business criteria (cf. Cooper and Artz, 1995). It is extremely important to take subjective criteria into account since some businesses are closed down despite their objective development as they do not give the entrepreneur fulfilment. Research indicates that subjective factors are often more significant than objective ones, e.g. independence and autonomy at work are more important for entrepreneurs than profits (cf. Lukeš, Stephen, Lukešová, 2006 after: Stephan, Spsychala, Lukeš, 2009). It also happens at times that some people commit too much to running the business and maintaining it despite the fact that it is unprofitable.

Drawbacks of economic criteria of success are also pointed out, together with the necessity to extend the concept (cf. Sternberg, 2007, after: Dej, 2008). Hence there appeared a need to develop a new approach to understanding success, resulting for instance from the fact that objective data are difficult to obtain (cf. Fiorito, LaForge, 1986, after: Dej, 2008) and hard to compare due to the lack of uniformity of the survey sample, e.g. one is dealing here with factors related to the industry the company operates in, and with an immense yet uneven increase of the company's income. It is frequently the case when small businesses start operating that they increase their profit only after a longer period of time (cf. Handler, Hanks, 1993). Subjective criteria measure success and make it possible to examine the attitude towards some general statements such as "My business is generally successful" or "I am satisfied with my income". Bearing in mind the division of factors into objective and subjective ones, Dej, Stephan and Gorgievsky focused on creating conceptualization of success that would take into account what entrepreneurs regarded as important as according to the Goal Setting Theory by Edwin A. Locke and Gary P. Latham (1984, 1990) people are satisfied when they accomplish goals that are important for them. Also, people are more persistent and make more effort while striving to reach a goal if it is their goal. The authors pointed out, therefore, multidimensional nature of the concept of success, departing from the classic economic point of view. According to that approach, an entrepreneur is successful if certain criteria have been met that he or she regarded significant.

Literature and own studies were drawn upon in order to distinguish suitable criteria. An analysis of the literature made it possible to distinguish success factors such as satisfaction with the achieved results, growth and collaboration (cf. Chandler, Hanks, 1993), external rewards (increase of income, safety, good life), independence, internal rewards, i.e. challenges, personal development, social respect, safety of the family (cf. Kuratko et al., 1997), professional criteria (intellectual activity, work-life balance, autonomy, relations with the society, income, increase in personal possessions), subjective criteria of non-financial nature (quality of products and services, acceptance on the market, image of the business, relations with customers), objective financial criteria (cost-effectiveness, income, increase in personal possessions, image of the business) and personal criteria (network of contacts, work-life balance) (cf. Orser et al., 2005, after: Dej,

2008). Other researchers also distinguished individual-oriented criteria (personal satisfaction, work-life balance, profits for future generations) and business-oriented ones (continuity, innovation, profits for future generations) (cf. Gorgievski, Ascalon, 2005). In relation to extensive presentation of success in the literature, the researchers decided to perform their own studies of 240 entrepreneurs from Germany and Poland (2006), asking them what success meant to them (cf. Dej, Stephan, Richter, 2007; Dej, 2008). Their research results show that entrepreneurs indicate many various ways of understanding success proving that taking into account only objective criteria represents an incomplete view, deprived of a series of meanings entrepreneurs attribute to success. The analysis of the literature and of the research led to a conceptualization of the notion of success in which objective success itself was not viewed as the best predictor of behavior, while the personal component was very important.

Five dimensions of the sense of success were distinguished. The first one is **company performance (success of the business, dynamism/growth)**, related to factors connected with its operation, i.e. profitability, profit-making, increase of the number of employees, income, profits, innovation, being better than competition. The authors refer to numerous studies related to this aspect.<sup>1</sup> The second dimension is **community impact (social success)**, including contribution to the social good, social responsibility for employees, creation of new jobs, and professional reputation. Researchers confirm the identification of this aspect not only by a further analysis of the questionnaire results, but also by the results of many studies.<sup>2</sup> The third dimension of success comprises **relations with co-workers and customers (workplace relationships)**, i.e. positive relations with customers, employee satisfaction and their loyalty towards the company, as well as a positive and supportive work climate. This aspect was also emphasized by other researchers.<sup>3</sup> The fourth aspect is **financial success (personal financial rewards)** (increase of own income, high life standard, financial security of the entrepreneur and his or her family). This aspect has also been studied many times.<sup>4</sup> The last aspect is **personal non-financial**

1 Cf. Kakati, 2003; Schenk, 1998; Orser et al. (in press); Adams, Sykes, 2003; Gorgievski, Ascalon, 2005; Hauser, 2007; Venkatramans and Ramanujam, 1986; Dej, Stephan, Richter, 2007; Hitt, Ireland, Camp, Sexton, 2001; Lechler, 2001, Adams, Sykes, 2003; Julien, 1998; Paige et al., 2002; Tsai, MacMillan, Low, 1991; Moser, Schuler, 1999; Murphy et al., 1996; Agarwal, Echambadi, Franco, Sarkar, 2004; Bollingtoft, Ulhoi, Madsen, Neergaard, 2003; Cooper, Javier Gimeno-Gascon, Woo, 1994; Kropp, Zolin, 2005; Stuart, Abetti, 1987; Kuratko, Ireland, Hornsby, 2001; Schumpeter, 1934; Bosma 2008; Engelen, 2002; Hitt et al., 2001; Reuf, 2002; Adams, Sikes, 2003; König 2007; Handler, Hanks, 1993; Dej, Stephan & Richter, 2007; after: Dej, 2009.

2 Cf. Scheinberg, MacMillan, 1998; Orlitzky, Schmidt, Rynes, 2003; McWilliams, Siegel, 2001; Paige et al., 2002; Foley, 2003; Scheinberg, MacMillan, 1998; Shane, Kolvereid, Westhead, 1991; Kuratko, Hornsby, Naffziger, 1997; Cormann, Perles, Yancini 1988; Gorgievski, Ascalon, 2005; Littunen; Tohmo, 2003; Mariussen, Wheelock, Baines, 1997; Mitra, 2002; Rosenblatt, DeMik, Anderson, Johnson, 1990; Wang et al., 2004; after: Dej, 2011.

3 Cf. Orser et al. (in press); Adams et al., 2003; Gorgievski, Ascalon, 2005; Reutner, 1987; Schenk, 1998.

4 Cf. Birley, Westhead, 1994; Ritchie, Eversley, Gibb, 1982; Gorgievski,



Figure 1. Success indicator 1.



Figure 2. Success indicator 2.

**Table 1**  
**Exemplary criterion of success between entrepreneurs and workers.**

Scale	Entrepreneurs	Workers
Financial success/ personal financial rewards	increase of own earnings, personal financial security, profitability of the company	increase of own earnings, personal financial security
Workplace relationships	positive working climate, employee satisfaction, social responsibility for employees	positive working climate, employee satisfaction
Social success/ community impact	professional reputation and social recognition, providing environmentally friendly products and services	-the scale is connected only with entrepreneurship
Dynamism/growth of the company, company performance	personal development, possibility of making decisions independently, being better than competition	personal development, possibility of making decisions independently
Personal fulfilment	work-life balance, social life and private contacts	work-life balance, social life and private contacts

**success (personal fulfilment)**, including such factors as work-life balance, time for oneself, decision making and taking challenges, as well as individual development. The role of that dimension has also been frequently emphasized in the literature and in research.<sup>5</sup>

The variable indicators are calculated on the basis of the results obtained in the *Success Scale* created by Dominika Dej, Ute Stephan and Marian Gorgievsky (2008). This conceptualization concerns success achieved by entrepreneurs, hence it was extended for the research purposes, and the tool was suitably modified in relation to employees of private and public companies. The scale can be used in research in two versions:

**First:** Success is defined here as accomplishment of goals. The survey respondent first rates, on a five-point Likert scale, the **importance of each success criterion** (from entirely insignificant to very significant), and subsequently rates the **degree of its fulfilment** (from entirely unfulfilled to entirely fulfilled). The sum of the products of multiplying the specific values and their accomplishment constitutes an indicator of general success (cf. Figure 1).

**Second:** The respondent rates only the **degree of fulfilment success criterion** (from entirely unfulfilled to entirely fulfilled). The average of all five scales is the success indicator (cf. Figure 2). This type of analysis was used in the article. Interpretation of results using the first version will be a part of another article (Paruzel-Czachura, in elaboration).

**Success of employees and economic crisis**

The above concept may also be used to assess the success of employees of private and state-owned companies. Success can be understood in the same way with regard to that group, though the criteria need to be slightly modified so that they are adapted to the occupational activity at issue. Employee success will be related to factors such as personal financial success (e.g. increase of own earnings), personal non-financial success (e.g. work-life balance, social life and private contacts), relations with co-workers, dynamism/growth of the company (e.g. personal development). In order to compare the exemplary criterion of success between entrepreneurs and workers see Table 1. A Polish translation of entrepreneur’s criterion is available in the authors’ article (Dej, Stephan, 2011).

Also, the employee rating of the company success would be significant here, corresponding to the entrepreneur’s rating of the same. It is assumed that a person employed at a company which s/he perceives as successful will perceive himself or herself as successful too (cf. Mowday, Porter, Steers, 1982). This situation

Ascalon, 2005; Cromie, 1987; Scheinberg, MacMillan, 1998; Ziegler, Hinz, 1992; Kuratko et al. 1997; after: Dej, 2011.

5 Cf. Mitra, 2002, Gorgievski, Ascalon, 2005; Orser et al. (in press); Nelson, Burke, 2000; Mitra 2002; Mariussen et al., 1997; Kuratko i inni, 1997; Ritchie, Eversley, Gibb, 1982; Cromie, 1987; Hisrich, Brush, 1984; Shane, Kolvereid, Westhead, 1991; Birley, Westhead, 1994; Shane, Kolvereid, Westhead, 1991; Scheinberg, MacMillan, 1998; after: Dej, 2011.

may only occur, however, provided that one significant condition is met, namely that the employee identifies with the organization, in accordance with the adaptability concept (cf. Rogacka-Trawińska, Leśniowski, 1980).

The other important factor included in the research was perception of economic crisis. Nowadays a lot of people talk about the crisis whose existence is emphasized by mass media. During the study of the phenomenon of success it was considered significant to ask the question whether the level of success would be influenced by **the perception of changes related to the economic crisis** and by **the rating of one's own income** compared to the country's average. Dominika Dej and Ute Stephan (2011) wrote about the role of financial aspects for success indicating that income and perception of the economic crisis seem to be relevant in this area. Currently existence of the economic crisis is frequently emphasized, however it is significant from the psychological point of view how an individual perceives her or his financial situation since such perception may modify their sense of success. No theoretical conception of economic crisis was taken into account during preparation to this part of the study, the indicator of the perception was a reference to 2 items about impact of economic crisis on respondents' life. Probably unemployed people suffer because of the economic crisis, yet only employed Poles took part in the research. What is more, this study concerns entrepreneurs and employees whose occupational activity involves an intellectual effort. We can refer at this point to the well-known term *white collars* introduced by the US sociologist Charles Wright Mills to describe representatives of what is referred to as the *new middle class*, with higher positions in the occupational hierarchy. According to the author, these are the people working in the public service or state administration sectors. The term relates for instance to accountants, office managers, lawyers, judges, business managers, stock brokers, financial advisors, company directors, engineers, scientists, secondary school teachers, doctors, laboratory technicians, journalists, artists, writers or musicians.

It is worthwhile to complete Mills' view with the concept developed by the Polish sociologist Mirosława Marody (1999, 2000, 2007) who divided Poland into three areas: **"privatized"**, **"state-owned"** and **"on the dole"**. The private sector, according to the author, is characterized by the fact that individual income depends on the work performed, while in the public sector income depends to more extent on one's position than on the effort made to fulfil one's duties. In conformity with market mechanisms, people employed by private companies must sell their resources, and consequently their individual achievements matter. This situation involves a larger occupational risk and a bigger likelihood of losing one's job, although the earnings are also higher. The sector includes entrepreneurs and people employed in private companies. Probably the entrepreneurs will have the highest level of financial success, according to the level of income (Gabrysz, 2006). What is referred to as the "state-owned" group operates in accordance with the rules imposed by the relevant entity with underlying social/ideological concepts (e.g. prestige of the specific position). The most important aspect here is the position in the determined

job hierarchy and maximum security, which also implies lower income. It is likely that in this group there is more relevant personal fulfilment. It could be connected with more free time, security, etc. Employees of state-owned companies probably will rate the current economic crisis as harmless due to the highest stability of their jobs. Probably employees of private companies – compared to employees of state-owned companies – rate their company success higher, because of the income, development of private companies and significance of public relations. The public companies do not attribute importance to such areas as modern technologies or development of the workers as it is in private sector. The third group comprises people who are "on the dole", i.e. not occupationally active. Only the first two groups distinguished by Marody ("privatized" and "state-owned" Poland) were taken into account in the empirical research described in this paper.

Psychologists are interested in how the groups mentioned above differ in terms of personality traits, temperament and competences. The largest amount of research was dedicated to characterization of entrepreneurs (cf. King, 1985; Drucker, 1992; Nęcka, 1993; Witkowski, 1994; Marchesnay, 1994; Strzalecki, 1996; Tyszką, 1997; Biegańska, 2000; Kwarciak, 2003; Kapusta, 2006; Zaleśkiewicz, 2004; Dej, 2007) who constitute a specific group in "privatized" Poland due to the fact that they operate under conditions of high competition and variability and must consequently have specific traits making it possible for them to react adequately. So far no comparative research related to differences in success levels between entrepreneurs and employees, taking into account the multidimensional success model has been carried out in Poland. This work seems to be another step towards understanding of psychological functioning of people from the point of view of their occupational activity.

### Study group

The total number of survey respondents was 394, however, only 341 questionnaires were suitable for further analysis. In the study entrepreneurs were assumed to be people running and managing their own businesses, but not necessarily those who actually established the respective business (cf. Rauch, Frese, 2007). Employees of state-owned companies are those who have been employed for more than one year in a company owned by the state while employees of private companies are those who have been employed for more than one year by persons who are owners, not necessarily founders of private businesses. The surveyed group included 178 women (52% of the surveyed) and 163 men (48% of the surveyed). The survey respondents belonged to one of three groups: employees of state-owned companies (136 people, including 70 women and 66 men), employees of private businesses (101 people, including 58 women and 43 men) and entrepreneurs (104 people, including 50 women and 54 men). The average age was 40.16 years among employees of state-owned companies, 31.04 years among employees of private companies and 38.45 years among entrepreneurs. In state-owned companies the average age of women was 39, and of men 41. In private companies the average age of women was 28, and of men 35. The average age of women running their own business was 37, while



the average age of men from this group was 39.

### Research tools

The research used the Subjective Entrepreneurial Success Scale (SESS) by Dominika Dej, Ute Stephan and Marian Gorgievsky (2008). The Scale has good psychometric characteristics. The analyses included five sub-scales in SESS that accounted for 60.69% of total variance. The Cronbach's Alpha was between .7 and .87. The scale was translated into Polish in collaboration with Dominika Dej, a Polish psychologist working in Germany. The Polish version of the scale is available in the latest article written by its authors (Dej, Stephan, 2011). **The tool for entrepreneurs** is composed of 24 items examining dynamism/growth (business success), community impact (social success), workplace relationships, personal financial rewards and personal fulfilment (personal non-financial rewards). The survey respondents rated implementation of each criterion in real life on a five-point scale. The survey respondents also rated general financial success of the company and individual success on a five-point scale (a total of two items). The tool was used to obtain a general score and scores in individual sub-scales. Entrepreneurs were also asked about their opinion concerning the statement "My business was generally successful in financial terms" on a five-point scale (definitely disagree, rather disagree, don't know, rather agree, definitely agree) and the question "Do you think that others perceive you as a successful person?" (totally unsuccessful, slightly successful, averagely successful, successful, very successful).

**Employees of private and state-owned companies** were surveyed using a scale modified for the research purposes. The tool has the same items as the one for entrepreneurs, but the employees were not asked about the business success since they do not have their own company (thus the scale was composed of 13 items). The same scale from SESS named social success was used; the survey respondents were also asked to rate the company's success by expressing their opinion concerning the assertion "The company I work in is generally successful in financial terms" and the question "Do you think that others perceive your company as successful?". Employees were also asked about their opinion concerning the statement "I am generally successful in financial terms" on a five-point scale (definitely disagree, rather disagree, don't know, rather agree, definitely agree) and the question "Do you think that others perceive you as a successful person?".

**The perception of the changes related to the economic crisis** was measured on a five-point Likert scale (definitely agree, rather agree, don't know, rather disagree, definitely disagree). The survey respondents answered the following questions:

- a) Has the situation at your workplace changed in relation to the current economic crisis?
- b) Are you afraid that the situation at your workplace may deteriorate in relation to the current economic crisis?

**The subjective rating of the level of own income in relation to the country's average** was measured on a seven-point scale (low, below average, slightly below average, more or less equal to the country's average, slightly above average, above average, high). The survey participants obtained the following instruction:

"Please circle on the scale enclosed how you rate the financial resources (the income level) that your family has available and that you can use. If you are single, please determine simply your own available resources. Please compare them to the average income in Poland.

### Research questions and hypotheses

The following questions and hypotheses were put forward on the basis of literature analysis:

**Question 1:** Are there any differences between entrepreneurs, employees of private and state-owned companies in terms of achieved success?

**Hypothesis 1:** *Entrepreneurs rate their own financial success higher – compared to employees of state-owned and private companies. Employees of state-owned companies, on the other hand, rate personal fulfilment higher – compared to employees of private companies and entrepreneurs. Employees of private companies achieve average results compared to other groups.*

**Question 2:** Are there any differences between employees of private and state-owned companies in terms of rating their company success?

**Hypothesis 2:** *Employees of private companies – compared to employees of state-owned companies – rate their company success higher.*

**Question 3:** Are there any differences between entrepreneurs, employees of private and state-owned companies in terms of perception of changes related to the economic crisis? Is the perception related with the level of success?

**Hypothesis 3:** *Employees of state-owned companies rate lower changes related to the economic crisis compared to entrepreneurs and employees of private companies. The perception of changes related to the economic crisis is related with the level of success (perception of economic crisis as dangerous is related with lower level of success).*

**Question 4:** Are there any differences between entrepreneurs, employees of private and state-owned companies in terms of the subjective rating of the level of their own earnings compared to the country average?

**Hypothesis 4:** *Employees of state-owned companies rate the level of their earnings as lowest, while entrepreneurs as highest.*

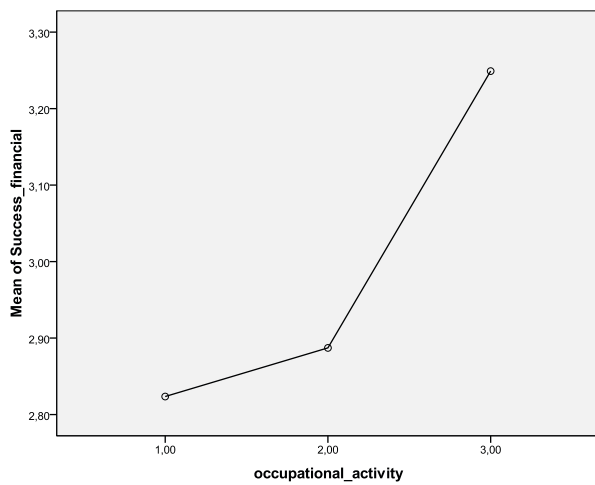
## Results

**Hypothesis 1:** The average level of success in the whole sample was 3.4 (Likert scale 1-5). Statistical analysis showed differences between groups in the field of financial success (SESS), dynamism/growth of the company (SESS), my financial success (workers) or success of my company (entrepreneurs) (additional item), evaluation of success by others (additional item) (cf. Table 1).

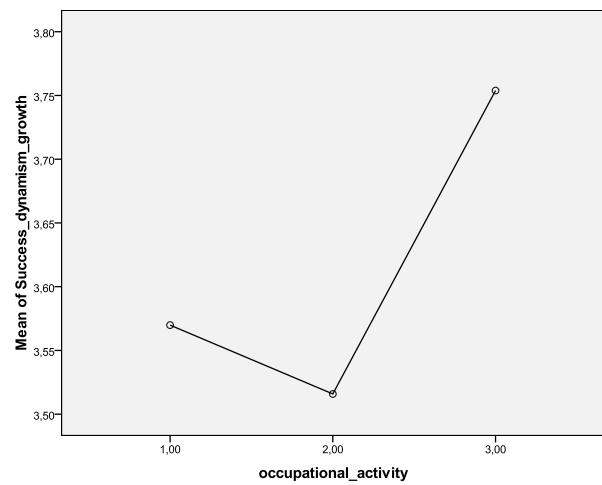
Entrepreneurs revealed a higher level of financial success, dynamism/growth of the company, my financial success (workers) or success of my company (entrepreneurs), evaluation of success by others. Summarizing, the first hypothesis was confirmed only

**Table 2**  
**Differences Between Entrepreneurs, Employees of Private and State Owned Companies in Terms of the Success.**

		ANOVA				
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Success Scale 1 Financial success	Between Groups	11.07.2012	2	1.05.854	1.08.2021	.000
	Within Groups	246.658	338	.730		
	Total	258.365	340			
Success Scale 2 Relations at work	Between Groups	.004	2	.002	.003	.997
	Within Groups	241.874	338	.716		
	Total	241.878	340			
Success Scale 3 Personal fulfilment	Between Groups	.097	2	.049	.073	.929
	Within Groups	224.369	338	.664		
	Total	224.466	340			
Success Scale 4 Dynamism/growth of the company	Between Groups	28.02.267	2	1.01.633	1.03.875	.022
	Within Groups	142.460	338	.421		
	Total	145.726	340			
"I am generally successful in financial terms"/ "My business was generally successful in financial terms"	Between Groups	17.980	2	1.08.990	1.08.648	.000
	Within Groups	351.381	338	1.01.1940		
	Total	369.361	340			
Evaluation of success by others: "Do you think that others perceive you as a successful person?"	Between Groups	26.926	2	13.463	14.280	.000
	Within Groups	318.652	338	.943		
	Total	345.578	340			
SUCCESS (SESS- general)	Between Groups	.034	2	.017	.049	.952
	Within Groups	114.794	338	.340		
	Total	114.828	340			



Graph 1. Financial success and occupational activity (1-3 LSD p=.000; 2-3 LSD p=.003).  
 1 – employees of state-owned companies 2 – employees of private firms 3 – entrepreneurs



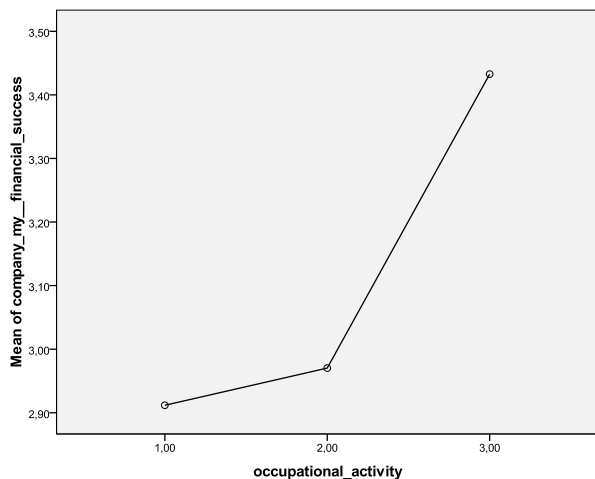
Graph 2. Dynamism/growth of the company and occupational activity (1-3 LSD p=.03; 2-3 LSD p=.009).  
 1 – employees of state-owned companies 2 – employees of private firms 3 – entrepreneurs

partially. The post hoc analyses confirmed that, in all cases, entrepreneurs have higher level than both employees of state-owned companies and employees of private firms (cf. Graphs 1-4).

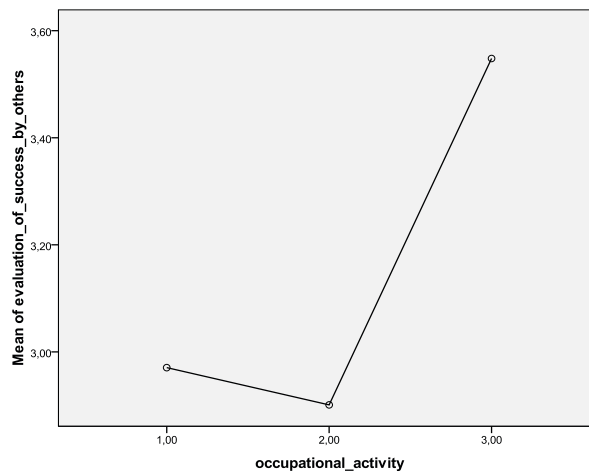
**Hypothesis 2:** Employees of private firms assess success of the company in which they work higher compared to employees of state-owned companies (cf. Table 2). The second hypothesis

was confirmed. The average for employees of private firms in company financial success was 3.8 (Likert scale 1-5) whereas for employees of state-owned companies it was 3.1. The average for employees of private firms in evaluation of company success by others was 3.5 (Likert scale 1-5), while for employees of state-owned companies it was 3.1.

**Hypothesis 3:** The question "Has the situation at your



Graph 3. Evaluation of my financial success (workers) or of my company (entrepreneurs) and occupational activity (1-3 LSD p=.000; 2-3 LSD p=.001). 1 – employees of state-owned companies 2 – employees of private firms 3 – entrepreneurs



Graph 4. Evaluation of success by others and occupational activity (1-3 LSD p=.000; 2-3 LSD p=.000).

1 – employees of state-owned companies 2 – employees of private firms 3 – entrepreneurs

Table 2

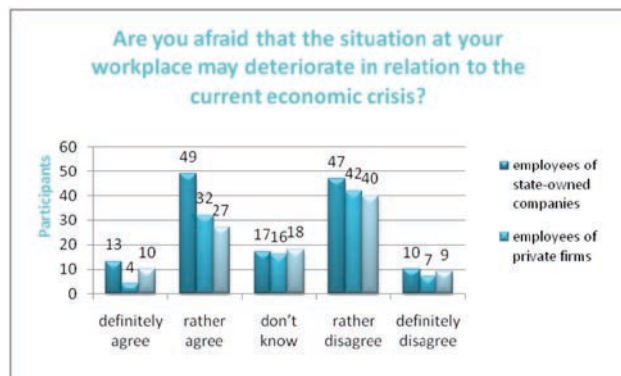
Differences Between Employees of Private and State-owned Companies] in Terms of Rating Their Company Success.

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Company financial success	Equal variances assumed	.080	.778	-5.812	235	.000	-.67414	.11599	-.90265	-.44563
Evaluation of company success by others	Equal variances assumed	.171	.680	-3.693	235	.000	-.45632	.12358	-.69978	-.21286

p < .001



Graph 5. Occupational activity and the perception of the changes related to the economic crisis.



Graph 6. The anxiety connected with changes related to the economic crisis.

workplace changed in relation to the current economic crisis?” subjects usually answered “rather disagree” (cf. Graph 5), but there are not statistically significant differences between groups (ANOVA, F = .885; sig. = .413).

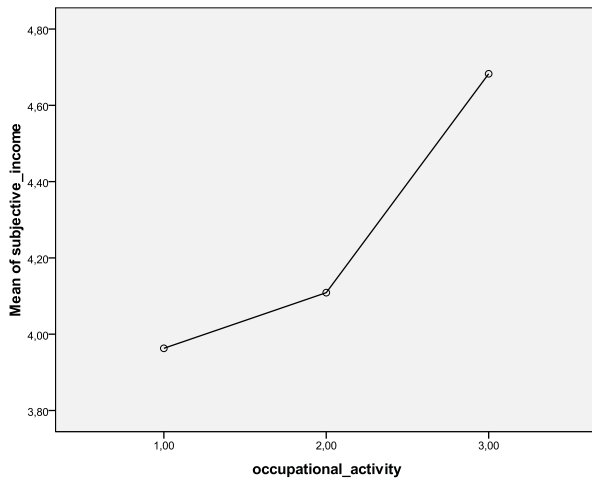
There are not statistically significant differences between groups in the question “Are you afraid that the situation at your workplace may deteriorate in relation to the current economic crisis?” (ANOVA, F = 1.182; sig. = .308), but we can see that

employees of state-owned companies have the most concerns (cf. Graph 6).

This part of the third hypothesis was not confirmed, but there are significant (p < .001) positive correlations between perception of economic crisis (the average of two questions above) and financial success (r= .235), relations at work (r = .142), personal fulfilment (r= .166), dynamism/growth of the company ( r= .171), my financial success (workers) or success of my company (entrepreneurs) (r= .176) and the general level of

**Table 3**  
Occupational activity and subjective income.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	32.416	2	16.208	31.07.262	.000
Within Groups	661.146	337	1.01.962		
Total	693.562	339			



Graph 7. Occupational activity and subjective income (1-3 LSD  $p=.000$ ; 2-3 LSD  $p=.004$ ).

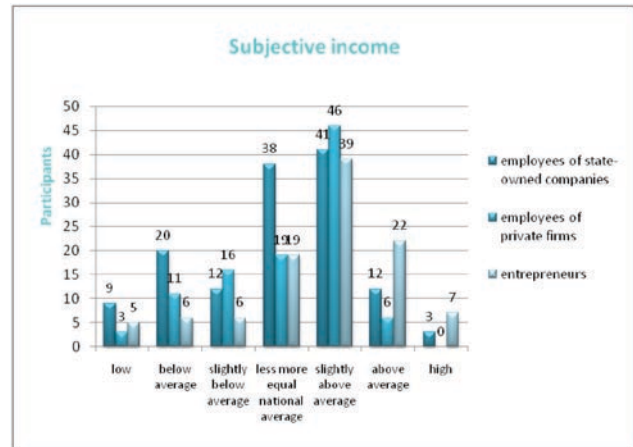
1 – employees of state-owned companies 2 – employees of private firms 3 – entrepreneurs

success ( $r=.238$ ). People who have higher level of financial success, good relations at work and personal fulfilment think that the company in which their work or their own company is growing and have high general result in success perceive economic crisis as harmless (their situation at workplace has not changed and they are not afraid that it will change).

**Hypothesis 4:** Entrepreneurs revealed a higher level of subjective income compared to employees (cf. Table 3 and Graphs 7-8), but there are not statistically significant differences between employees of state-owned companies and private firms. The fourth hypothesis was confirmed only partially.

### Interpretation of the results and discussion

The research has demonstrated that there are significant differences between the “two Polands” distinguished by Marody (1999, 2000, 2007), namely the “state-owned” and the “privatized” Poland from the psychological point of view in terms of the sense of success. What is more, the results suggest something which Marody did not point out, namely that two forms of occupational activity appear within “privatized Poland” that are distinct from the psychological point of view, i.e. entrepreneurs and employees of private companies. Entrepreneurs are characterized by a higher sense of financial success and dynamism/growth of the company. What is more, they rate their own financial success higher and think that other people rate their success high, too. A high sense of dynamism/growth of the company can be explained by the fact of running one’s own business not only does bring high financial income, but also psychological benefits such as personal



Graph 8. Occupational activity and subjective income – detailed answers of participants.

development.

Employees of state and private companies are characterized by the lowest degree of financial success, which was demonstrated both in the questionnaire testing success and in the questions concerning the rating of the respondents’ own financial resources compared to the country average. This result conforms to the average income in Poland, where for instance the average income per employee was approx. 17,514 zlotys annually in 2006, while per entrepreneur (taking into account those paying taxes at the rate of 19 per cent) it was as high as 87,298 zlotys (cf. Gabrysz, 2006). Only the income of people making their living from work or business activity was taken into account. The workers (compared to entrepreneurs) also have lower level of growth of companies in which they work, which has impact on their personal development. The survey respondents also think that other people rate their success low (“average rating of one’s own success by others”) compared to other group. These results can be explained by the fact that being employed involves difficulties in being promoted, no independence in making important decisions, difficulties in personal development, low earnings making it impossible to develop in one’s private and professional life, low social impact on other people (please note: the survey did not cover employees at very high positions).

A comparison between employees of private and state-owned companies showed that the former rated their companies significantly higher, both in financial terms and in terms of rating of that success by other people. This is most likely to be connected with the fact that one of the basic goals of private businesses is success, which in turn makes the business care all the time about its public relations. A state-owned company, due to the higher stability of existence (although the results about the economic



crisis show something different about subjective perception of the crisis), does not focus to such a large extent on its relations with the outside world and on shaping of a positive image. Private businesses also achieve higher financial income and they are managed differently.

The study did not demonstrate any significant differences between perception of changes related to the economic crisis depending on occupational activity. This result does not conform with the concept put forward by Marody (1999, 2000, 2007), according to which employees of state-owned companies should feel the greatest stability on the labour market. It turns out, therefore, that currently employees of state-owned companies are as preoccupied about their professional future as employees of private companies or entrepreneurs. This is most likely to result from the current unstable situation on the labour market. The research proved significant positive correlations between perception of economic crisis and financial success, work relationships, personal fulfilment, dynamism/growth of the company, my financial success (workers) or success of my company (entrepreneurs) and the general level of success. It means that successful people don't see any changes in their work connected with economic crisis. It is a result consistent with the theory. Probably it is the following direction: our income depends on economic crisis, if economic crisis has impact on my earnings, I will feel less successful (because an important part of the success is its financial aspect, as Dej confirmed).

Analyzing the above results, it is worth considering whether occupational activity can contribute to better functioning of individuals. It turns out that from the psychological point of view, taking into account the selected variables, it is most advantageous to run one's own business. In fact, even though finance does not correlate with happiness (cf. Czapiński, 2004), it still increases the sense of success, which according to the concept developed by Dej, Stephan and Gorgievsky (2007, 2008, 2009) is connected with fulfilment in all dimensions of life, including material ones. It has to be remembered that these factors constitute a small fraction of all psychological aspects related to the performance of specific work. Other psychological variables are accompanied by situational aspects here. It is therefore necessary to conduct further research and analyses.

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