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THE SENSE OF SELF-EFFICACY OF MEN AND WOMEN IN EARLY ADULTHOOD AS A COMPONENT OF COMPETENCE

Key words: sense of self-efficacy, cognitive competences, the SET test, sex, early adulthood

Abstract: The article is a report from a study on the sense of self-efficacy in the period of early adulthood, measured with the Sense of Efficacy Test (SET) by M. Chomczyńska-Rubacha and K. Rubacha. The variable was studied with regard to two differentiating categories: biological sex and age. The research was quantitative, based on a randomly selected research sample. The obtained results indicate that women are characterised by a significantly lower sense of self-efficacy as compared with men; however, there are no significant differences between various age groups. The sex-related differences may be sought in the development of other kind of competences in men and women.

Theoretical assumptions

Each day an adult person undertakes to implement numerous tasks or achieve various goals of a different value and applied within different scopes of time. The level and quality of performance is to a large extent dependent on external factors and the degree of difficulty of a given task but, most of all, on the skills and cognitive resources of a person, including their sense of self-efficacy.

The sense of one's own efficacy is defined as „a person's perception of their capability to cope in particular situations (Bandura, after: Pervin, John 2002, p. 477). The manner of perceiving one's own efficacy affects the way of acting and thinking, i.e. it affects the person's:

- thinking patterns – the sense of being able to cope/ not being able to cope with the task,
- emotions – a feeling of joy, excitement/ anxiety, depression,
- action – grater commitment/ reservation, inhibition (ibid., p. 480).

The sense of self-efficacy also constitutes one of the determinants of goal implementation. This concerns the entire dynamic system consisting of both

those that are important at a given moment, as well as those of less importance. When setting a certain goal, a person passes a judgement on his/her possibilities related to its implementation and juxtaposes them with the requirements of the environment, thus providing an estimation of the necessary energy input (*ibid.*, p. 478). In this system, the sense of efficacy is of situational nature as is related to „an individual's conviction regarding their capability to fulfil various conditions allowing them to undertake actions leading to the achievement of intended results” (Chomczyńska-Rubacha, Rubacha, 2013a, p. 108).

Bandura (1999, after: *ibid.*) writes also of a different perspective in defining the sense of efficacy by placing it in the area of individual experience and competences, including in particular the cognitive-behavioural and situational competences. Hence, we may speak of a different system, where the sense of efficacy is related to the activity in general and not to particular conditions that may determine such an activity.

Combining the sense of efficacy with competences to act directs the attention to the possibility to observe differences in this area with regard to biological sex. Namely, according to the theory on social competences, men more often exhibit the so-called competence syndrome as compared with women. A man is seen as a competent person in numerous areas of his professional and social activity, recognised as a specialist and expert, whereas in relation to women such a phenomenon is unusual (Mandal 2007).

Research works show that the public space, associated with knowledge and a high degree of responsibility, is taken up by men, whereas the private space, connected with family and care, is occupied by women (*ibid.*). Thus, one may expect that also in relation to the sense of efficacy men will obtain better results than women.

However, the studies conducted thus far are not explicit, presumably due to an inaccurate definition of the category of sex, which tends to be treated stereotypically rather than on the basis of scientific knowledge. This is indicated by the study of M. Chomczyńska-Rubacha and K. Rubacha (2007, p. 84-85) showing a lack of differences between men and women in the area of the sense of efficacy. However, the situation takes on a new meaning in the juxtaposition of the above result with the one concerned with a statistically significant relationship between the dominant development phase of a sex role, i.e. the integration phase acc. to the classification by J. H. Block, and the sense of efficacy. In the integration phase, i.e. the phase where the integration of male and females aspects of self occurs, women reach a higher level of the sense of efficacy than men. Therefore, „the fact of being a man or a woman in a biological sense does not determine the differentiation of parameters of social functioning but rather the degree to which particular persons identify themselves with sex-related stereotypes” (*ibid.*).

Another interesting research context is constituted by the phase of psychosocial development of early adulthood. According to the theory by

D.J. Levinson, this is a period of dynamic development of an adult life structure „based on a tremendous motivation to act, a high level of life force energy, creativity, pride and satisfaction” (Ziółkowska, 2005, p. 424). One might say that this phase of development is characterised mainly by energy and vital strength. On the other hand, however, a certain clash between youthful ideals and the „harsh” reality is possible, as a result of which a young person may lose the sense of influence on his/her own life. Additionally, the category of early adulthood changes its meaning in the contemporary context of transitional society. Young adults tend to extend the safe period of moratorium due to the lack of requirement to become involved in important life issues (Cuprjak, 2007, p.81). Thus, one may expect that persons at a more advance stage of early adulthood will manifest a higher level of knowledge on themselves, including the sense of efficacy.

Methodology of Research

The objective of the undertaken theoretical-verificational study consisted in the validation of a hypothesis on the existence of a statistically significant difference between men and women in relation to the mean values regarding their sense of efficacy, measured with the SET test.

The analyses were expanded with a response to a research question concerning differences in the average sense of efficacy between two age groups: younger – 20-30 years and older – 31-40 years. However, the conclusions are marked with a large error due to vast discrepancies in the sizes of both research groups.

The research was implemented within the normative-functional paradigm, in a quasi-experimental scheme. The applied method consisted in testing with the use of the Sense of Efficacy Test (SET) by M. Chomczyńska-Rubacha and K. Rubacha (2013). The test was standardised. The results are presented on three levels: low – level 1, average – level 2 and high – level 3. The research sample was selected randomly among male and female postgraduate students of several schools of higher education in the Kuiavian-Pomeranian province in Poland. The study was participated by 147 persons, including 79 women and 68 men. All of the subjects were in the period of early adulthood: 117 persons were aged between 20-30 years, and 30 persons between 31-40 years.

Research Results

The hypothesis verification and the responses to the research question were conducted with the use of percentage distributions of the sense of efficacy with regard to sex and age group and the Kruskal-Wallis non-parametric statistical test for independent samples. The above test was applied in the place of the

ANOVA (analysis of variance) test due to the fact that the distribution of results failed to meet the primary condition of variance homogeneity.

Data analyses without grouping variables indicated that the researched persons obtained results of an average level (arithmetic mean of 2.17). The skewness of the distribution is negative, which points to the existence of low results that lowered the mean value.

The sense of self-efficacy versus sex

The obtained percentage results with regard to low, average and high results regarding the sense of efficacy indicate the prevalence of average results in women and high results in men (Tab. 1, Fig. 1). In as many as 50% of cases men obtained a high level of the sense of efficacy, with the average level ranking second (over 30%), and the low level placed at the last position (19%). Women's results were similar with regard to the low level (25%); however, the percentage indicator in relation to the high level was similar (29%). The average level was prevalent (over 45%).

Tab. 1. Percentage distribution of the sense of self-efficacy with regard to sex

<i>sex</i>	Sense of self-efficacy (%)			
	low	average	high	total
<i>women</i>	25.3	45.6	29.1	100.0
<i>men</i>	19.1	30.9	50.0	100.0

Source: own research data

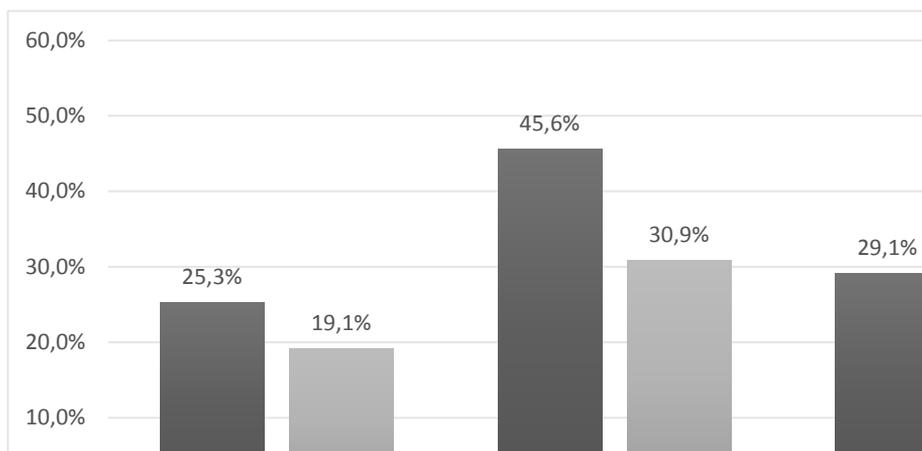


Fig. 1. Percentage distribution of the sense of self-efficacy with regard to sex

Source: own research data

The above analyses were confirmed with the result of the Kruskal-Wallis test. The obtained significance level in relation to the sense of self-efficacy of men and women (0.025) ruled out the possibility of adoption of zero hypothesis. As a result, it is possible to adopt the previous alternative hypothesis. Therefore, we may conclude that the researched men and women differ with regard to the levels of the sense of self-efficacy, while the percentage data indicate higher results in relation to this variable in men as compared with women.

Tab. 2. Summary of the zero hypothesis test

Zero hypothesis	Test	Significance	Decision on the hypothesis
Distribution of the sense of efficacy is the same for the variable category: sex	The Kruskal-Wallis test on independent variables	0.025	Reject the zero hypothesis

Source: own research data.

The sense of self-efficacy versus age

The results obtained with regard to the sense of efficacy in two age groups are at a very similar level (Tab. 3., Fig. 2). Both in younger and older age group the prevalent results are those pointing to the average and high level, with only a slight advantage in younger group. However, as it was mentioned before, the results are difficult to interpret, as a small size of older group (30 persons) causes an instability of results and small credibility in its juxtaposition with a considerably larger group.

Tab. 3. Percentage distribution of the sense of self-efficacy with regard to age

age	Sense of self-efficacy (%)			
	low	average	high	total
20-30 years	21.4	39.3	39.3	100.0
31-40 years	26.7	36.7	36.7	100.0

Source: own research data.

The above results are confirmed with the Kruskal-Wallis test indicating that the differences in relation to the category of the sense of efficacy are statistically insignificant, therefore both younger and older groups are characterised by the same level of the sense of efficacy.

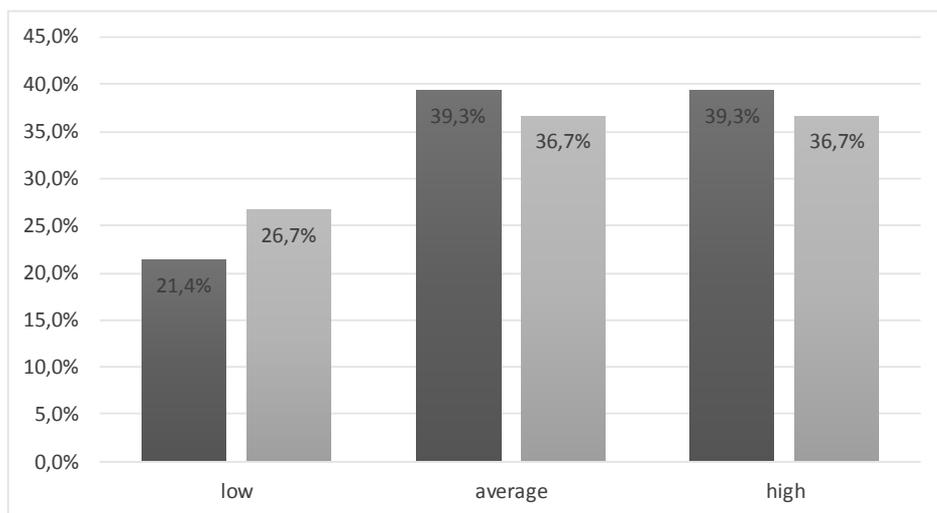


Fig. 2. Percentage distribution of the sense of self-efficacy with regard to age
Source: own research data

Discussion

The conducted study confirmed the hypothesis on the existing differences in the level of the sense of self-efficacy between men and women. The cited literature is not explicit in determining the direction of this disparity. Considering the development of cognitive competences or the so-called professional competences and the higher results obtained by men with their regard, a similar result within the studied category was to be expected. It appears that despite the equal level of education (higher), women still tend to exhibit a lower level of the sense of influence on the results of their actions as compared with men. In my opinion, more interesting information could be provided with a study concerned with the sense of efficacy in the context of the sense of one's identity and/or enriched with biographic studies which, through narration analysis would allow to understand and describe the dynamics of that phenomenon in the context of individual life situation, e.g. the educational background.

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Poczucie własnej skuteczności kobiet i mężczyzn we wczesnej dorosłości jako składnik kompetencji

Słowa kluczowe: poczucie własnej skuteczności, kompetencje poznawcze, test TPS, płeć, wczesna dorosłość

Streszczenie: Artykuł jest raportem z badań nad poczuciem własnej skuteczności w okresie wczesnej dorosłości, badanej testem TPS, autorstwa M. Chomczyńskiej-Rubachy i K. Rubachy. Poziom zmiennej badano w oparciu o dwie różnicujące kategorie: płeć biologiczną i wiek. Badania miały charakter ilościowy oparte na losowo dobranej próbie badawczej. Rezultaty badań wskazują, że kobiety charakteryzują się istotnie niższym poczuciem skuteczności niż mężczyźni, natomiast nie ma różnic pomiędzy grupami wiekowymi. Skutków różnic płciowych można poszukiwać w rozwoju innego rodzaju kompetencji u kobiet i mężczyzn.

Selbstwirksamkeit der Männer und Frauen im frühen Erwachsenenalter als eine Komponente der Kompetenz

Schlüsselwörter: Gefühl der Selbstwirksamkeit, kognitive Kompetenzen, TPS-Test, Geschlecht, frühes Erwachsenenalter

Zusammenfassung: Der Artikel ist ein Untersuchungsbericht über das Gefühl der Selbstwirksamkeit im frühen Erwachsenenalter, untersucht mit dem TPS-Test (Selbstwirksamkeitstest) von M. Chomczyńska-Rubacha und K. Rubacha. Der

Wert der Variable wurde anhand von zwei differenzierenden Kategorien – dem biologischen Geschlecht und dem Alter – untersucht. Die Untersuchungen hatten einen quantitativen Charakter und stützten sich auf eine stichprobenartig gewählte Untersuchungsprobe. Aus den Untersuchungsergebnissen resultiert, dass Frauen ein wesentlich niedrigeres Gefühl der Selbstwirksamkeit kennzeichnet als es bei den Männern der Fall ist, es bestehen jedoch keine Unterschiede zwischen einzelnen Altersgruppen. Die Folgen der Geschlechtsunterschiede kann man in der Entwicklung einer anderen Art der Kompetenzen bei Frauen und Männern suchen.

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THE NARRATIVE AS A STRATEGY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF EMOTIONAL COMPETENCES OF ADULTS

Key words: human emotionality, emotional competence, cultural theory of emotion, narrative

Abstract: The purpose of the article is to discuss the problem of adults' emotional development. To describe the skills and abilities connected with human emotionality, the term "emotional competence" is used.

The concept of emotional competence originates from the cultural theories of emotions, which emphasize that emotions are socially created or constructed in the sense that what people feel is conditioned by their socialization in the culture and participation in social structures. Cultural ideologies, beliefs and norms affecting social structures define what emotions to experience and how to express them. Emotional competence is therefore the result of the processes of broadly defined learning and participation in social practices. It means that everyone can develop skills connected with emotional sphere at such a level that they will give them a sense of self-efficacy in situations activating emotions.

Placing deliberations on human emotionality in the socio-cultural approach draws attention to one more important issue, which is the narrative format of emotional competence. According to many researchers (representatives of the socio-cultural approach) we can talk about emotional scripts treated as narrative structures giving form and meaning to affective feelings.

Juxtaposing emotion as a script with the most basic and natural human "being in the world", which is storytelling (narrating a story) makes us aware of the new possibilities of combining them in pedagogical theory and practice.

The procedure of constructing the narrative may be used to understand and interpret one's own emotions and those of others. Psychologists present the study results which argue that many emotions such as pride, fear and shame are the products of the processes of interpretation of the condition of one's self, in the context of specific stories. Self-narrative emotional patterns are usually formed at an early stage of our lives, and then they are developed and woven into many areas of functioning. And although the process of learning emotional scripts usually takes place without any conscious control on our part, adults, as confirmed by researchers, can understand these patterns and change their structure. In this context the narrative is a tool for changing the structure of emotional competence. Thus it becomes a noteworthy instrument of pedagogical influence.