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**PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL FACTORS OF CHARACTER LINK TO THE GENDER  
OF EMPLOYEES IN TERMS OF ORGANIZATIONAL FUNCTIONING**

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**Abstract.** The purpose of this article is to analyze the relationship between positively valued traits and psychological and social factors in the Polish labor market. In addition, it was shown whether the relationship between these variables differed by gender, and both negative and positive associations of these relationships were demonstrated. As a result, differences were found within the overall relationship, as well as separately by gender, between certain employee characteristics and certain levels of psychological and social workplace factors.

**Keywords:** human resources, job insecurity, management, organization, psychology, risk

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**JEL Classifications:** I2

## **1. Introduction**

The modern labor market has undergone major changes, as evidenced by, among other things, the globalization of recent decades, changes in the way work is organized along with an increased desire for flexibility (Czerw, 2017). Flexibility in this context is understood as the ability of organizations to adapt to different situational contexts (e.g., to different situational contexts (Cho, 2018). The level of adaptability of the organization also places demands on employees to change, which has increased the drive to understand human resources in the workplace (Galte Schermer, 2019).

In addition, it has increased the need to explore how the individual can be empowered and feel better. Empowering the individual, in turn, has a positive impact on work-related behavior and subjective experience.

By examining the relationship between positively valued traits and psychological and social factors in workplaces, the goal is to enable an increased understanding of how employees can be empowered, feel better in the workplace, and thus, perform better in the workplace in the long run. In addition, the study aims to see if this relationship varies by gender, as there is no previous research in this area.

## **2. Positive psychology**

Positive psychology, is a branch of psychological science that focuses mainly on a person's strengths. Like traditional psychology, it aims to prevent negative mental disorders and the resulting (Gregersen, MacIntyre, 2018). What distinguishes the psychological approach from the traditional one is that it wants to strengthen

individuals' happiness (Gregersen, MacIntyre, 2018). Positive psychology therefore complements the view of human beings by studying happiness, selflessness and contributing to the understanding of the whole human experience at the individual, group and organizational levels (Świeży, 2020).

This prevention, according to the teachings of positive psychology, consists of, focusing on the strengths of a person's character. Research conducted in the field of prevention clearly indicates that human strengths can prevent mental illness.

In positive psychology, character strengths have been introduced as a universal measure of approximation to "good character," that is, a set of morally positively valued traits. All individuals possess character strengths to varying degrees, and they are often manifested in an individual's behavior, and therefore define the individual's characteristics (Rothmann, Cooper, 2015).

As in other personality studies, positive character strengths are considered stable both over time and across cultures (Zawadzka, 2014). By understanding one's own strengths, they can be used to improve relationships, increase well-being, build resilience, and manage and solve problems (Rothmann, Cooper, 2015).

A well-used classification manual in this field, Values in Action - Inventory of Strengths (VIA-IS), defined 24 character strengths and developed instruments to identify them (Kelloway, 2017). The most relevant character strengths included in the VIA-IS are Zeal, Hope, Love, Gratitude, Curiosity, Perspective, Perseverance, Religiousness, Self-regulation, Humor, Social intelligence, Forgiveness, Teamwork, Judgment and critical thinking, Thirst for knowledge, Excellence (Kelloway, 2017).

Since the introduction of the VIA-IS, character strengths have formed the basis for various models; where strengths have been combined into various virtues, positive traits. The model by McGrath motivated, based on his research, to classify character strengths into three traits (Rothmann, Cooper, 2015).

Inquisitiveness encompasses various intellectual endeavors along with an appreciation of learning, Caring can be understood in relation to an interest in social relationships - along with the ability to care for others and self-control (control indicates the maintenance of healthy habits and a willingness to work hard (Hünefeld, Köper, 2016).

Numerous studies have shown a link between character strengths, positive emotions and life and life satisfaction, and interventions based on these character strengths have been shown to increase happiness levels and reduce depressive symptoms (Rogozińska-Mitrut, 2022).

### **3. Gender differences in psychological and social workplace factors**

Psychological demands include heavy workloads, job insecurity, interpersonal conflicts and unclear goals, as well as psychosocial factors for the individual, for example, in the form of job control and social support (Gregersen, MacIntyre, 2018). However, the way in which psychological and social workplace factors are operationalized can vary (Gregersen, MacIntyre, 2018).

The socio-organizational level includes factors such as organizational support and support from leaders, as well as organizational culture and organizational climate (Rothmann, Cooper, 2015). Research in organizational psychology continues to emphasize the importance of organizational support and shows that organizations should pay attention to various psychological and social factors in the workplace to support employees. This can be done through support from leaders, through factors such as organizational support and support from leaders, as well as organizational culture and organizational climate. In the long run, this leads to increased employee well-being (Rothmann, Cooper, 2015).

The type of organizational support needed and interventions to be implemented depends on the characteristics

of the organization and its prevailing conditions. This, in turn, depends on cross-cultural factors; it is rooted in the context in which the organization is located and can, for example, manifest itself in the context in which the organization is located and can be expressed, for example, in issues of justice, as well as in views on leadership (Gregersen, MacIntyre, 2018).

In summary, character strengths and psychological and social factors of the workplace can be important for improving the situation of employees at various levels in the workplace. This is in order to improve mental ill-health, thereby creating a more balanced and functional workforce in organizations. However, employees' experiences and behaviors in the workplace may depend on the group under study, which in this case is young adults in temporary employment, so it is important to consider this group.

In the pursuit of permanent employment or better career opportunities, greater commitment and job satisfaction can be generated among temporary employees, thereby increasing their productivity and cooperation. In this way, productivity and cooperation can be increased (Hünefeld, Köper, 2016).

For more than a century, it has been debated whether men and women are fundamentally different or not (Szostak, 2021; Gawel, 2021; Ziaran et al., 2021; Krchová et al., 2021; Gudjonsson et al., 2022; Rezk et al., 2023).

In psychological research, the debate has been about biological differences between the sexes, variation within the sexes, but also gender roles (Kelloway, 2017). Theories have emerged to explain similarities or differences as a result of sociological and biological factors, among others. In theories that explain gender differences from a biological perspective, behavior is understood as behavior is understood as the result of the action of various hormones and also includes other physiological aspects (Kelloway, 2017).

The importance of identifying gender differences in relation to character strengths was emphasized by Peterson (Kelloway, 2017), among others, who believed that expanding knowledge in this area could help effectively motivate employees, increase their productivity, create loyalty and improve both physical and psychological well-being in the workplace.

The literature to date has contributed to a better understanding of positive psychology and its theory of character strengths, as well as psychological and social factors of the workplace and how with organization, work and the individual, coupled with a greater understanding of temporary employment and gender differences, this has raised the question of what insights previous research can contribute to insights on this topic.

Because the research area of positive psychology and the study of character strengths along with psychological and social workplace factors is relatively new, there has been limited research and reporting in this area, particularly with regard to fixed-term employment.

Gender differences in relation to character strengths have been examined in several studies. The results showed that women and men generally showed similarities in strengths, although there were small significant differences between the sexes, with women generally scoring higher than men in strengths with the exception of Creativity (which is part of the trait Curiosity) (Cho, 2018).

In a meta-analysis conducted by Heintz et al. (Heintz et al., 2019), which included data on the character strengths of more than one million men and women, found that women scored higher than men in the traits of Love and Kindness, Gratitude and Excellence. The strengths did not differ by nationality, but they did vary with age. Another study found significant differences between young adult men and women in character strengths. At the same time, there was no difference in life satisfaction between these individuals, with the assumption that these differences were due to prevailing stereotypes about gender and character strengths valued in a given culture. When the differences between men and women in character strengths, it is interesting to examine what previous research has said about gender differences in the workplace.

Modern work life has brought changes in organizations, as well as in the nature of work and the situation of the individual. Research at the social and organizational level found that women in the modern workplace experienced more emotional demands, fewer opportunities to influence the workplace and lower well-being than men. Women were also found to have more difficulty achieving higher organizational positions than men. Men in leadership positions were more likely to report being in conflict with superiors, leaders and experienced a greater lack of support; however, there were other findings in which men experienced higher demands at work than women and that they experienced lower opportunities for influence than women (Kelloway, 2017).

Studies conducted on psychological and social factors at the individual level have shown that the increased attachment to work enabled by modern work life has affected workplace norms. These norms can be expressed in terms of identity and status, and it was found that they may have differed between the sexes. Well, masculinity was associated with more working hours, leading to higher status, while women instead struggled with high expectations to always be available to the employer on the one hand, and on the other hand, simultaneously assuming the role of a present mother (Rothmann, Cooper, 2015).

Differences in the workplace between men and women at the individual level were also reflected in the results of differences in workplace values and what predicts the health and stress levels of men and women (Stasiowski, Kłobuszewska, 2018). Cultural and environmental aspects best predicted women's health status, while men's health status was best predicted by how they were treated by people with pronounced authoritarianism. In terms of workplace values, women prioritized factors such as relationships, fairness and cooperation much higher than men, who instead valued money, benefits and authority much higher than women (Stasiowski, Kłobuszewska, 2018).

Finally, differences between men and women were identified at the individual level on the following issues: women scored lower than men on career ambition, mental stability and active coping, while women, to a greater extent than men, were ready to immediately resign from jobs in which they were not clearly successful. In addition, work-related behaviors that risked negative health consequences, such as burnout, were more common among women (Gregersen, MacIntyre, 2018).

#### **4. Gender interdependence on character strengths and its relationship to psychological and social workplace factors**

The need to study gender differences was defined for this article, where the relationship between positively valued traits (character strengths) and work-related behaviors and patterns in workplaces was examined, but where the sample included only women. The study forms the basis for this paper, which aims to examine the relationship between character strengths and psychological and social factors, in a sample of young adults in temporary employment. It further examines whether they differ by gender. The sample is important because many young adults have fixed-term employment, reflecting a flexible and modern work life. The study has contributed to a deeper understanding of this topic to provide a broader basis for understanding how positive psychology can be applied in the workplace.

This knowledge is important for deciding whether and what tailored interventions can promote healthy behavior and well-being of individuals.

#### **Research questions**

1. Is there a general correlation between positively valued traits (character strengths) and psychological and social factors in Polish organizations?
2. Is there a difference between men and women with regard to which character strengths correlate with psychological and social factors?

## Methodology

The sample consisted of men and women aged 19-29, and 46 respondents answered the questionnaire. Of the respondents, 52% were female ( $n = 24$ ) and 48% were male ( $n = 22$ ), with 2.2% aged 19-21, 71.7% aged 22-24, 21.7% aged 25-27 and 4.3% aged 28-29. From an ethical perspective, it was decided to include only adults in the study.

## Results

Question 1: Is there a general correlation between positively valued traits (character strengths) and psychological and social factors in Polish organizations?

The results of the multiple regression show that there was no significant correlation between workplace factors (social and organizational level, work level and individual level) as a general model and psychological and social factors. It also differs from other theories, as well as previous studies, which found that virtues co-occur with positive emotions and additionally predict health-promoting behaviors and act to prevent depression (Voßemer et al., 2018).

In conclusion, therefore, it can be concluded that there is no general relationship between the overall model of psychological and social workplace factors associated with individual characteristics. The significance of this result can be interpreted to mean that psychological and social factors are not of interest in relation to character strengths on the basis of the chosen model.

The fact that the result for these two variables is significant means that the question of whether there is a general correlation between character strengths and psychological and social workplace factors can be questioned. The negative correlation means that lower perceptions of work management skills, lower commitment to the organization, lower work motivation and lower predictability of work, correlate with higher feelings of love, cooperation, sense of justice and forgiveness. The reverse was also found; that low caring correlates with high work motivation. This contradicts theory and previous research on character strengths, which shows that higher scores on various virtues are positively related to positive emotions and healthy work-related behavior (Voßemer et al., 2018).

In summary, it cannot be concluded that there is a general relationship between virtues and general psychological and social workplace factors as a model, based on multiple regression analysis. Analysis of the relationship between individual workplace factors and character traits, separately, showed that only one of the nine possible combinations in the result was significant.

Question 2: Is there a difference between men and women with regard to which character strengths correlate with psychological and social factors?

When the multiple regression analysis was conducted separately on men and women, the result showed that there was no gender difference in the relationship between character strengths and the model of psychological and social workplace factors. This can be explained by previous studies indicating that men and women generally show similarities on character strengths (Heintz et al., 2019), as well as on psychological and social workplace factors.

Bivariate correlation analysis, on the other hand, was designed to examine gender differences in the relationship between levels of workplace factors separately, against virtues. For women, the result showed a significant negative relationship between individual level and Caring, as did the result from the bivariate correlation analysis of the overall relationship in the discussion of Question 1.

One explanation for gender differences in character strengths is a discussion of prevailing gender stereotypes

in society; which character strengths are valued in a particular culture. For example, women's values in the workplace are characterized, to a greater extent than men's, by the priority of honesty, relationships and cooperation (Voßemer et al., 2018). A negative association with high scores on Caring would imply low scores at the individual level. Low scores at the individual level in women can be explained by findings that women, to a greater extent than men, have lower scores on work ambition, mental stability and active coping. In addition, their work-related behaviors are more likely to result in negative health outcomes, such as job burnout.

An inverse analysis of the negative relationship would mean that women have higher levels of commitment to the organization (high scores on the individual level) and lower scores on Caring. Higher commitment among female temporary workers may be due to the fact that women, to a greater extent than men, are satisfied with forms of temporary employment (Stasiowski, Kłobuszewska, 2018).

The results of the bivariate correlation analysis for men are consistent with previous studies. First, previous research shows that men, relative to women, have higher scores on creativity, which is part of the trait of inquisitiveness. Otherwise, women generally higher scores than men in all other character strengths (Stasiowski, Kłobuszewska, 2018). Second, the finding of a positive relationship confirms theory and previous research that studies that find that virtues co-occur with positive emotions and predict healthy behavior.

The finding of a positive relationship indicates that the introduction of preventive measures to strengthen Inquisitiveness in men may be associated with increased well-being at the social and organizational levels. The link between men and the social and organizational level is supported by studies showing that their health status is predicted by how they are treated by people with clear authority. In addition, by results showing that men in leadership positions report higher levels of perceived lack of organizational support (Rothmann, Cooper, 2015).

Knowing the direction of the relationship between the social and organizational level and the employee's character trait, can be used as a basis for preventive interventions for crisis measures, prevention, and for improving the well-being and performance of the individual. One possible explanation for the differences in performance between men and women in the relationship between character strengths and psychological and social workplace factors may be that there are gender differences in character strengths and/or workplace factors.

## **5. Summary and conclusions**

The purpose of this article was to examine the relationship between positively valued traits and social and psychological factors in the flexible Polish labor market, with this as a starting point, the goal was to further investigate whether this differs by gender.

Based on an examination of the overall relationship between character strengths and psychological and social workplace factors, it is not possible to draw any unanimous conclusions about this relationship. However, the study was able to show significant differences between individual character traits and specific levels of psychological and social workplace factors, both for the overall relationship and there for gender separately. Caution should be exercised in applying the results, in part because the results indicate both the benefit and disadvantage of the theory of previous studies, but also because the study has several limitations.

Through its theoretical perspective and descriptive approach, however, the study has contributed to a better understanding of the complexities in the areas of character strengths, social and psychological factors of workplace, gender and employment, which has implications for future research in this area.

It should be assumed that positive psychology, and thus the empowerment of individuals, continues to be an interesting research area. Psychological approaches can provide opportunities and serve as a basis for prevention and intervention. In this way, the consequences of today's flexible labor market can be counteracted.

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