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JOB SATISFACTION OF EMPLOYEES IN THE MALOPOLSKIE AND POMORSKIE VOIVODSHIP AS AN EXPRESSION OF THE QUALITY OF WORK LIFE – A COMPARATIVE STUDY¹

Summary

Purpose – The aim of this article is to provide a comparative analysis of the results of research carried out in the Malopolskie and Pomorskie voivodeships in four areas: identification of key work attributes based on the ranking of their importance, assessment of satisfaction with the performance of work features being at the core of the analysis, exposure of the gaps between the expectations of employees and satisfaction with the performance of individual work features.

Research method – The research was conducted using the survey method and purposive sampling technique. In both voivodeships the gender and age of the respondents' was identical. The measuring instrument included four work dimensions which consisted of 18 partial features.

Results – In both voivodeships, the most important work features were: the opportunity to accommodate work with personal life (i.e. work life balance), working relationships with co-workers, fairness of the superior followed by remuneration and communication at work. Statistically significant differences in the assessment of satisfaction with the performance of six features were shown.

Originality / value – *The results* obtained constitute a strong basis for developing a scale to measure the perceived quality of work life, allowing for comparisons between regions, taking into account the cultural environment in Poland. The high value of KMO coefficients and the satisfactory internal consistency of the scale allowed for the testing of competitive confirmatory models.

Key words: quality of work life, job satisfaction, labour market, comparative analysis of regions

JEL classification: E200, J00, M120

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1. Introduction

The category of life quality may be analysed from various perspectives that depend on interested entities: institutions responsible for the development of regions and communities of inhabitants [*Handbook of Social Indicators ...*, 2012; Kryk, 2015], representatives of business interested in a desired behaviour of both external customers (consumers) and internal customers (employees), who have influence on companies' market standing and financial results [Lau, May, 1998; Jokinen, Heiskanen, 2013], organisations or persons engaged in actions in favour of sustainable development [Borys, 2001, Łuszczuk, 2016] and individual citizens for whom life – a specific study subject – is of special significance [*Jakość życia w Polsce*, 2017; Sirgy, 2012].

Taking into account the last of the above mentioned stakeholders' groups, work (its quality) is an important aspect of life. Adults of a working age spend one third of their time at work, and success in that area has an enormous impact on the remaining aspects of their lives, as well as the lives of their families. Balancing employees' work life with their personal life is a very important factor that currently determines human resource management [Greenhaus et al., 2003; Robak, Słocińska, 2016].

Changes occurring on a quickly evolving labour market carry new challenges, which to a large degree can be associated with new technologies that provide many opportunities to employees that affect the quality of work life and job satisfaction [OECD, 2018, 2019].

This article focuses on job satisfaction levels amongst the inhabitants of two voivodeships located in the south and north of Poland, the Malopolskie and Pomorskie voivodeships. The considerations have accounted for the context of quality of work life, which required adopting the perspective of employed persons (psychological approach, subjective by nature) [Sirgy, 2012].

Given the objectives (stated in the summary) and the exploratory nature of the study, an attempt was made to find responses to the following research questions:

- Are inhabitants of the Malopolskie and Pomorskie voivodeships satisfied with their lifestyles (in the general sense) and in particularly their professional lives?
- Does the developed scale of job satisfaction indicate adequacy to conduct factor analysis and test competitive factor models?
- Are the adopted theoretical dimensions of the presented job satisfaction scale internally consistent?
- What are the differences in the perception of key work attributes among the employees surveyed in both voivodeships?
- In which areas are the greatest gaps between employees' expectations towards specific work features and their performance observed?

Providing responses to the above research questions was possible based on the analysis of data obtained from original studies conducted in the 18-55 age group.

The authors aimed to develop a scale to measure the perceived quality of work life, allowing for comparisons between regions and also taking into account the cultural environment in Poland. Of note were the characteristics of Poles' professional experience which can be attributed to two important historical events. The first one was system transformation, which took place in 1989 (the first fully democratic elections were held in 1991), and the second was Poland's accession to the European Union. Poland has been a member of the European Union since 1 May 2004. The participants of the study who were older had experienced not only the transformation of the political system but also the economic and social transformation that has taken place in the county. The latter had the biggest personal behavioural influence on the labour market as it required a complete shift in mind-set and the need to accept new principles of functioning in society including within the working environment. At the time of Poland's entry into the European Union these individuals were approximately 40-41 years old. In comparison, the younger employees have not experienced the transformation period and at the time of Poland's entry to the EU were 3-4 years old. Hence the current climate is the only one which is familiar to them.

2. Quality of work life and job satisfaction

The concept of quality of work life is not a new notion and although the conceptual framework dates back to the 1960s [Hian, Einstein, 1990], controversies and discussions concerning its definition, connection with satisfaction and possibility to measure both categories are ongoing. Finding a solution satisfactory for all the interested-participants is difficult, given the context related nature of these terms. These are constructs (ideas) not directly observed by researchers since they do not exist in reality. They are created to understand how humans formulate thoughts about objects and how such beliefs may affect their behaviour [Rebber, Rebber 2005]. In-depth theoretical definitions of these constructs are necessary to enable better conceptualization of research problems and create accurate operational definitions which allow us to understand the overall phenomena and processes. Examples of defining the latter notion and attempts to operationalise the same by indicating the most important dimensions can be found in the works of several authors [Afroz, 2017, Bora et al., 2015; Ramawickrama et al., 2017, Srivastava, Kanpur, 2014].

Sirgy, Efraty, Siegel and Lee [2001, p. 278] brought attention to the relationship between the quality of work life and satisfaction of lower and higher-order needs. They identified seven key needs: health and safety, economic and family, social, esteem, self-actualisation, knowledge and aesthetic needs. Each of these needs may include more than one dimension.

Among 27 dimensions identified in the literature, Afroz [2017, p. 573] distinguished 13 major ones. Among them he pointed out: adequate and fair compensation, opportunity for growth, safe and healthy working conditions, social

integration and cohesiveness, work and total life space, relations with supervisors, using human capabilities, compliance with law and justice, rewards and recognition, job security, autonomy and control, participation in decision making and communication.

Oliver believes that the debate on quality and satisfaction comes down to several issues: dependence on experience, attributes and dimensions, expectations and standards, their cognitive or affective origin, conceptual precedence and time reference (short- or long-term phenomenon) [Oliver, 2010, p. 175-185]. The above mentioned terms seem to be different. Their interrelations are complex due to mutual interaction between dimensions applied in the assessment of quality and satisfaction and also due to the differences between assessments specific for certain circumstances and global assessments.

An increased interest in people's quality of work life and their job satisfaction stems among others from the fact of introducing information technology and globalisation, factors which have transformed employees into the most precious capital that is worth investing in [Afroz, 2017, p. 570]. Not only is it the company capital, but also the capital of the region.

3. Selected aspects of Malopolskie and Pomorskie labour market

The Malopolskie voivodeship occupies 4.9% of Poland's territory and it is inhabited by 8.8% of the country's population. The Pomorskie voivodeship, on the other hand, occupies a slightly bigger area (5.9% of the country's territory), but it is inhabited by only 6.0% of the total population [*Rocznik Statystyczny Województw*, 2018].

Selected data available on the social and economic development and labour market for both voivodeships (compared to Poland) in 2017 is presented in table 1. The share of the Malopolskie voivodeship in generating GDP and gross value added was higher than that of the Pomorskie voivodeship. Average employment within industry in Poland amounted to 74.2 per 100 people in 2017, while in the Malopolskie voivodeship it was measured at 62.9 per 100 people. In the Pomorskie voivodeship it was marginally higher at 70.3 per 100 people. The unemployment rate in both voivodeships was similar (5.3% in Malopolskie and 5.4% in Pomorskie) and both were lower than the national average (6.6%) [*Rocznik Statystyczny Województw* 2018].

The basic labour market measure is the population's professional activity coefficient, or the share of employed people in the total population aged 15 and over. In the Pomorskie voivodeship it amounted to 58.4% and was 2.3% higher than in the Malopolskie voivodeship, while the national average reached the value of 56.4%.

The unemployment rate in both voivodeships fits into positive trends on the labour market – it is lower than the national average. The labour market both in the Malopolskie and Pomorskie voivodeships are employee-governed markets rather than that of the employer.

TABLE 1

Selected data on social and economic development and labour market for the Malopolskie and Pomorskie voivodeships compared to Poland in 2017

| Specification | Malopolskie voivodeship | Pomorskie voivodeship | Poland |
|--|-------------------------|-----------------------|---------|
| population in 1000s | 3391.380 | 2324.3 | 38433.6 |
| natural growth per 1000 inhabitants | 1.9 | 2.51 | -0.02 |
| employed people per 1000 inhabitants | 320.0 | 276.1 | 307.9 |
| GDP per capita, current prices, PLN (2016 data) | 43865 | 46913 | 48432 |
| voivodeship share in GDP generation (%) | 8.0 | 5.8 | - |
| voivodeship share in gross value added generation (%) | 8.0 | 5.8 | - |
| average gross monthly remuneration (PLN) | 3925.97 | 4211.69 | 4283.73 |
| gross nominal disposable income per capita in the sector of households | 27583 | 28176 | 29182 |
| average employment in the industry per 100 employed people | 62.9 | 70.3 | 74.2 |
| registered unemployment rate in % | 5.3 | 5.4 | 6.6 |
| total professional activity coefficient in % (according BAEL) | 56.1 | 58.4 | 56.4 |

Source: own elaboration on the basis: [*Rocznik statystyczny województwa malopolskiego, 2018; Rocznik statystyczny województwa pomorskiego, 2018*].

4. Methodological assumptions of the study and sample characteristics

In designing a tool to measure the quality of work life for all questions concerning that area, a 5-point scale which Poles are familiar with due to its application in the Polish educational system was applied. An assumption can thus be made that the adopted scale has the status of a metric scale. The scale of job satisfaction presented in this article consists of 18 items grouped under four theoretical dimensions (aspects): safety (4 items), interpersonal relationships (5 items), growth prospects (5 items) and external support (4 items). The names of particular variables (items) and adopted symbols which facilitate the presentation of results in subsequent tables and charts are shown in table 3.

An additional task involved the evaluation of satisfaction with lifestyle (in the general sense) and job satisfaction.

Calculations were performed using STATISTICA 13.3. software.

The study was conducted at the turn of 2018, using an internet survey together with a direct survey technique. These methods made it feasible to reach a more differentiated group of people, and, most importantly, all age groups. A purposive sampling technique was applied and the study involved adults employed at the time

of conducting the research. Participation in the survey was voluntary and an attempt was made to ensure full anonymity of the responses received. With the exception of gender, four age groups were included in the sample: up to 25, 26-35, 36-45 and 46-55. The number of observations in each sub-group was 30, which resulted in that the presumed number of study participants amounted to 240 people from each voivodeship – 50% women and men and 25% people from each age group. In both voivodeships the samples were representative for the gender of respondents. In the case of age variables, the age category up to 25 years was overrepresented.

Three categories of education were taken into account: vocational, complete secondary and higher education. On the basis of the results obtained it can be stated that in both voivodeships the biggest group were individuals who declared having higher education (62.09% in the Malopolskie voivodeship, 86.25% in the Pomorskie voivodeship), and the least numerous group of respondents had vocational education (3.33% and 2.08%, respectively). Thus participation of people with complete secondary education was greater in the Malopolskie voivodeship (34.58% compared to 11.67% in the Pomorskie voivodeship).

Taking into account the respondents' sector of employment, most people in the Malopolskie voivodeship worked in the private sector (59.17%), followed by the public sector (37.08%), and in the Pomorskie voivodeship the situation was opposite – 51.25% people were employed in the public sector and 47.91% in the private sector. The share of people employed in non-profit organisations was negligent – 2.92% and 0.42%, respectively. The remaining part were lacking responses (0.83% and 0.42%). 37.92% of people in the Malopolskie voivodeship, and 43.33% of people in the Pomorskie voivodeship were employed in small companies, employing up to 50 people. An opposite situation concerned large enterprises (of more than 250 employees) – 44.17% respondents from the first voivodeship declared employment in such companies, compared to 39.17% from the latter. The number of people working in medium size enterprises (50-249 of those employed) was comparable and amounted to 17.50% and 17.08%, respectively. In both voivodeships only one person did not provide a response.

5. Obtained results

Having assessed satisfaction with lifestyle in general and with work life, it may be stated that the surveyed inhabitants of both voivodeships are satisfied and very satisfied with their lifestyle in general and with their working life. Satisfaction with lifestyle was declared by 85.83% of the Malopolskie voivodeship inhabitants and 83.33% of the Pomorskie voivodeship inhabitants. In the case of job satisfaction, the results were 68.58% and 72.08%, respectively.

Internal consistency (homogeneity) of the entire scale and its individual dimensions were assessed next. To that effect a commonly applied measure was used, i.e. the Cronbach's alpha coefficient. In the literature the following α values are usually recommended [Nunally, 1978, p. 245; Cortina 1993, pp. 98-104; Kline, 2000, p. 13; DeVellis, 2012, pp. 109-110]:

- for applied research – $\alpha \geq 0.90$ (excellent),
- for basic research – $0.8 \leq \alpha < 0.9$ (good),
- for preliminary research – $0.7 \leq \alpha < 0.8$ (acceptable),
- for exploratory research – $0.6 \leq \alpha < 0.7$ (questionable), and $0.5 \leq \alpha < 0.6$ (poor).

α values below 0.5 are unacceptable.

That principle should be applied carefully since a greater number of items on the scale may overstate its values. Some authors justified continuation of the analysis using complex scales/dimensions with values below 0.6, and even below 0.5, arguing that “slightly increasing the number of items would lead to acceptable values for Cronbach’s alpha” [e.g. Griethuijsen et al., 2014, p. 589].

On the other hand, the measure of adequacy in selecting variables to conduct factor analysis, Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin (KMO) coefficient is adopted. The value of that coefficient suggested by Kaiser is as follows: 0.90 – marvellous, 0.80 – meritorious, 0.70 – middling, 0.60 – mediocre, 0.50 – miserable [Kaiser, 1974, p. 35].

Both coefficients assume values from the range (0.1).

Obtained results, both for the importance of particular partial features and their performance in work places are presented in table 2. The values of Cronbach’s alpha obtained for the whole scale and all analysed cases are high – from 0.8189 for the scale of importance and the Malopolskie voivodeship to 0.9121 also for the scale of importance and the Pomorskie voivodeship. Slightly lower, but also high values were obtained for the KMO coefficient and the same cases – 0.7938 and 0.9020, respectively.

When analysing particular dimensions, it may be noted that a satisfactory internal consistency – both for the scale of importance and performance – was obtained for two dimensions: relations and growth prospects. For the safety dimension, in six of the cases analysed only one possessed a value which did not exceed 0.6 (it was 0.5757). The poorest result was obtained in the support dimension. In the six analysed research situations, in as many as four cases Cronbach’s alpha was below 0.6, which represents a very low internal consistency of that dimension and a need to search for a more beneficial factor structure. Of note, however, is that the least consistent dimensions consisted of four items and already in the case of extending the set by 1 item the value of that coefficient did not exceed the value of 0.6 only for two analysed cases.

Results presented in table 3 allow for an analysis of perceived importance and performance of partial work features taken into account in the studies. Organising features in the order of their importance, resulting from calculated arithmetic means for each of the voivodeships does not cause difficulty as in both cases the same features had similar importance. Statistically significant differences between means in the case of importance were observed for five features: R5, B2, W2, P1 and W4. Three features from the safety dimension (B4, B3, B1) and four features from the relations dimension (R5, R2, R4, R1) achieved the top seven positions. These are the same features in both voivodeships.

TABLE 2

Internal consistency of job satisfaction dimensions taken into account in the study together with evaluation of collected data in terms of adequacy for conducting factor analysis

| Dimension | Variable and its designation | | Study area | Internal consistency of dimension | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|------------------------|---|--|--|--|
| | Name | Applied feature symbol | | Total | Voivodeship | |
| | | | | | Malopolskie | Pomorskie |
| safety | safety employment | B1 | importance (adjusted mean) performance (adjusted mean) | 0.6400 (0.3141) 0.6531 (0.3230) | 0.5757 (0.2525) 0.6583 (0.3269) | 0.6796 (0.3637) 0.6321 (0.3039) |
| | compliance with the labour code | B2 | | | | |
| | remuneration | B3 | | | | |
| | opportunity to accommodate work with personal life | B4 | | | | |
| relations | relations with supervisors | R1 | importance (adjusted mean) performance (adjusted mean) | 0.8215 (0.4861) 0.8002 (0.4507) | 0.7114 (0.3370) 0.7580 (0.3898) | 0.8746 (0.5922) 0.8302 (0.5043) |
| | fairness of the supervisor | R2 | | | | |
| | motivating employees | R3 | | | | |
| | communication at work | R4 | | | | |
| | relations with co-workers | R5 | | | | |
| growth prospects | growth opportunity | P1 | importance (adjusted mean) performance (adjusted mean) | 0.7667 (0.4035) 0.8058 (0.4647) | 0.7069 (0.3328) 0.7942 (0.4422) | 0.8136 (0.4753) 0.8152 (0.4883) |
| | promotion opportunity | P2 | | | | |
| | success at work | P3 | | | | |
| | sense of recognition | P4 | | | | |
| | job prestige | P5 | | | | |
| support | working time flexibility | W1 | importance (adjusted mean) performance (adjusted mean) | 0.6100 (0.2791) 0.5319 (0.2290) | 0.5738 (0.2501) 0.5616 (0.2500) | 0.6312 (0.2989) 0.4891 (0.2023) |
| | workplace proximity to the place of residence | W2 | | | | |
| | help in difficult situations | W3 | | | | |
| | social benefits | W4 | | | | |
| Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) coefficient | | | importance | 0.8918 | 0.7938 | 0.9020 |
| | | | performance | 0.8918 | 0.8789 | 0.8616 |
| Cronbach's alpha | | | importance | 0.8817 | 0.8189 | 0.9121 |
| | | | performance | 0.8855 | 0.8767 | 0.8904 |

Source: own elaboration.

This order is not retained for the perception of performance of analysed features. Statistically significant differences between means in this case were observed for six features: B3, B1, P4, B2, W2 and W4. An additional relationship between perceived importance and practical implementation of analysed features is presented on chart 1. Points which reflected a decrease of perceived importance of features appeared on nearly one line for each voivodeship. Points which represented mean perfor-

mance of corresponding features are scattered over the whole area, below points representing importance.

In order to organise the “chaos” observed at the bottom of chart 1, the gaps were shown in an organised arrangement on chart 2. Looking at the symbols that describe the X axis it appears that the following features ranked on the first seven places among the greatest divergences:

- B2 (remuneration) – gaps 1.05 and 1.32 points;
- R3 (motivating employees) – gaps 1.18 and 1.04 points;
- P4 (sense of recognition) – gaps 0.83 and 0.95 points;
- R4 (communication at work) – gaps 0.83 and 0.82 points;
- B4 (opportunity to accommodate work with personal life) – gaps 0.81 and 0.82 points;
- P1 (opportunity for growth) – gaps 0.83 and 0.69 points;
- R2 (fairness of the supervisor) – gaps 0.79 and 0.80 points.

Among the above indicated features only two are related with the growth prospects dimension: P4 and P1, and three are related with the relations dimension.

TABLE 3

Perception of importance and performance of particular work features – mean values

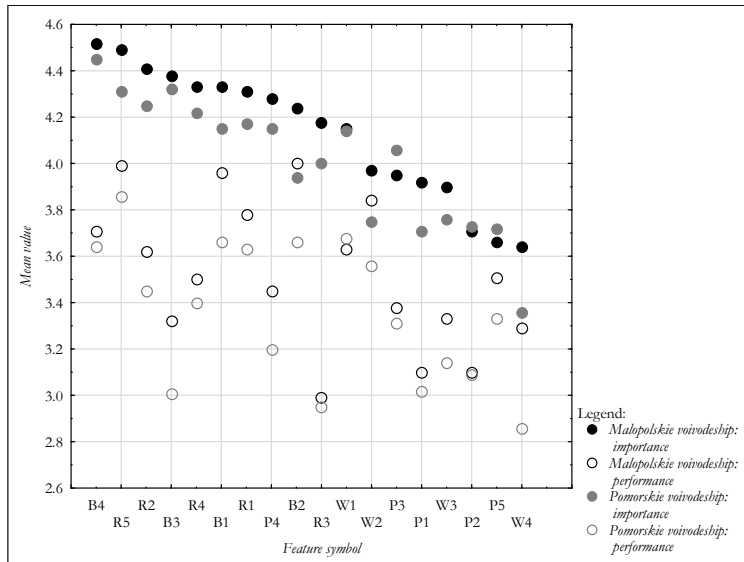
| No. | Applied feature symbol | Mean importance, voivodeship | | Mean performance, voivodeship | |
|-----|------------------------|------------------------------|-------------|-------------------------------|-------------|
| | | Malopolskie | Pomorskie | Malopolskie | Pomorskie |
| 1 | B4 | 4.52 | 4.45 | 3.71 | 3.64 |
| 2 | R5 | 4.49 | 4.31 | 3.99 | 3.86 |
| 3 | R2 | 4.41 | 4.25 | 3.62 | 3.45 |
| 4 | B3 | 4.38 | 4.32 | 3.32 | 3.01 |
| 5 | R4 | 4.33 | 4.22 | 3.50 | 3.40 |
| 6 | B1 | 4.33 | 4.15 | 3.96 | 3.66 |
| 7 | R1 | 4.31 | 4.17 | 3.78 | 3.63 |
| 8 | P4 | 4.28 | 4.15 | 3.45 | 3.20 |
| 9 | B2 | 4.24 | 3.94 | 4.24 | 3.94 |
| 10 | R3 | 4.18 | 4.00 | 2.99 | 2.95 |
| 11 | W1 | 4.15 | 4.14 | 3.63 | 3.68 |
| 12 | W2 | 3.97 | 3.75 | 3.84 | 3.56 |
| 13 | P3 | 3.95 | 4.06 | 3.38 | 3.31 |
| 14 | P1 | 3.92 | 3.71 | 3.10 | 3.02 |
| 15 | W3 | 3.90 | 3.76 | 3.33 | 3.14 |
| 16 | P2 | 3.71 | 3.73 | 3.10 | 3.09 |
| 17 | P5 | 3.66 | 3.72 | 3.51 | 3.33 |
| 18 | W4 | 3.64 | 3.36 | 3.29 | 2.86 |

Note: Statistically significant differences between means on the level of $\alpha = 0.05$ were marked in bold

Source: own elaboration.

CHART 1

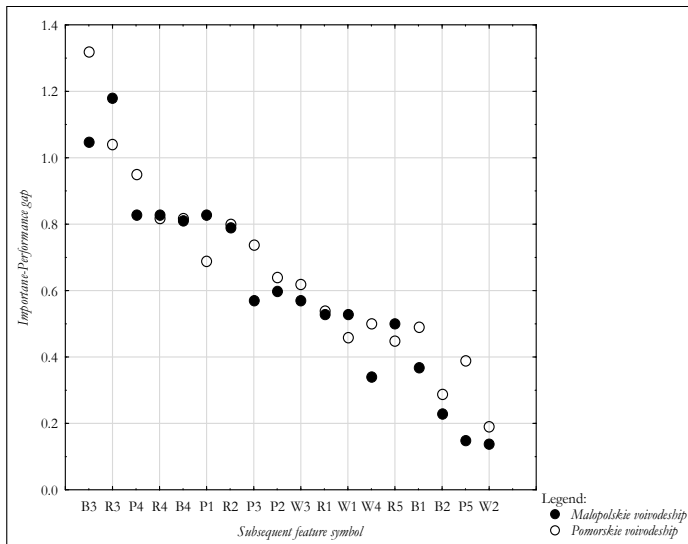
Perceived importance of particular work features and their performance in respondents' work places



Source: own elaboration.

CHART 2

Observed gaps between the importance of particular work features and their performance



Source: own elaboration.

5. Conclusions

This article focuses on the quality of and satisfaction with working life. The analysis covered the results of studies conducted in two voivodeships: Malopolskie and Pomorskie. No differences were shown in the perception of key work attributes among the representatives of the surveyed voivodeships. These included: opportunity to accommodate work with personal life (B4), relations with co-workers (R5), fairness of the supervisor (R2), remuneration (B3), communication at work (R4), job security (B1) and sense of recognition (P4).

The biggest gaps found between the expectations (importance of work features), and their performance only partly concerned growth prospects. These were, in the following sequence: remuneration (B3), motivating employees (R3), sense of recognition (P4), communication at work (R4), opportunity to accommodate work with personal life (B4), opportunity for growth (P1) and fairness of the supervisor (R2).

The results presented form a strong basis to develop a scale for the measurement of perceived quality of and satisfaction with working life, taking into account the cultural environment in Poland and allowing for comparisons between regions. Analysing collected data is advisable in the context of internal consistency dimensions, taking into account the gender and age of those employed. Low internal consistency of the dimension specified as support may be caused by a lack of experience in the area of performance of these work features in younger age groups. Research in that area should be continued using triangulation in the area of research approaches and methods. Empirical material concerning five regions in Poland has already been gathered.

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