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# Masculinity vs Femininity in Polish and Ukrainian Organisational Cultures

**Abstract:** One of the five cultural dimensions suggested by G. Hofstede, the dimension of masculinity and femininity, is very controversial. Defining cultures as feminine and masculine results in two issues. In the first, the content one, masculine cultures are characterised by “hard”, instrumental values, whereas feminine cultures by “soft” values whose core is the quality of interpersonal relations. In feminine cultures gender differences disappear, however, with the increase in the masculinisation of culture, the differences in the range of gender values grow. The article is of cognitive character. It shows the results of the research concerning the values and basic objectives in the range of dimensions of masculinity and femininity carried out in Polish and Ukrainian organizations.

**Key words:** organisational culture, cultural dimensions, dimension of masculinity and femininity

## Introduction

Culture directs the way of thinking about man, it forms the frames of what is considered as the way of realisation of humanity. In the studies of management the attention is on organisational culture. M. Kostera claims that organisational cultures are only a small part within a bigger cultural context and that the customs from the outside permeate inside in a visible way (Kostera, 2005, p. 42). Therefore, looking at organisational culture in isolation from a wider cultural context seems to be a utopian approach.

Managing organisations which function in culturally heterogeneous conditions requires not only the knowledge of the language or customs of other cultures, but also more subtle abilities, based on emotions: tolerance, openness and acceptance (Kozłowski, Jemielniak, Latusek, 2009). According to G. Hofstede, intercultural communication can be learnt and the basis for this process of learning is first of all the realisation of the fact that each person is "mentally programmed" in a different way because each person was raised in a different way (2007). Another important issue is the tendency to generalise the cultural phenomena. It has been accepted to attribute the same features to the representatives of national cultures of post-socialist countries.

In the article the attention has been placed on showing the differences in the dimension which causes most definitional problems – masculinity and femininity, in the organisational cultures of two companies that deal with the production of metal furniture whose seats are in neighbouring countries: Poland and Ukraine. Both companies are managed in a similar way, their vision and objectives are alike, the systems of assessment and reward are also the same. Such specifics of the studied companies allow us to obtain the answer to the question whether specific features of national culture (Polish or Ukrainian) are visible in the masculinity-femininity dimension in the organisational culture of the studied subjects.

It is important to stress that relating to just one dimension does not give a full picture of the two cultures. For this reason, the conclusions

that come from the research have been treated as an introduction to a bigger research project.

## 1. Masculinity and femininity as a cultural dimension

In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century social anthropologists reached the conclusion that societies, both the traditional ones and the contemporary ones, face the same problems. The solutions, however, are different. This conception became popular mainly thanks to two American researchers: R. Benedict and M. Mead. A natural consequence of such an attitude was an attempt to specify the problems common to all societies. In 1954 a sociologist A. Inkeles and a psychologist D. Levinson, published a vast anthology of English-language literature about national cultures. Twenty years later G. Hofstede analysed this huge database and began his own study. The author, using a questionnaire carried out on dozens of thousands of employees from IBM, extracted differences between them connected with culture and categorised them in the form of four, five and then six dimensions:

- PDI – Power Distance Index;
- IDV – Individualism;
- MAS – Masculinity;
- UAI – Uncertainty Avoidance Index;
- LTO – Long term Orientation;
- IND – Indulgence.

**Masculinity-femininity** is the third dimension of culture and similarly to the previous two dimensions it is bipolar. The influence of culture, which modifies biological conditions, does not occur as strongly in any other area of individual and social life as in the range of gender psychological properties and relations between men and women. Analysing the variety of what is acceptable or forbidden for men and women as well as in the interactions

between them, we realise how considerable the degree of cultural flexibility in relation to the nature is. Nevertheless, describing cultures as feminine or masculine is not frequent in the literature of social studies, that is why the experiment by G. Hofstede attracts attention. The researcher claims that cultural programming makes us support a harder, more competitive approach to the world or a more humane, caring and understanding one. Arising from basic assumptions prerequisites of shaping masculine and feminine societies have been presented in table 1.

**Table 1. Cultural assumptions in the dimension masculinity/femininity**

Masculinity	Femininity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• men must have the characteristics of a conqueror and women can fulfil caring roles, which are of less importance</li> <li>• a smaller proportion of women in labour market</li> <li>• social roles are very important and unchangeable, the division on the basis of gender is stressed</li> <li>• humanization of work means enlargement of the scope of competences</li> <li>• effectiveness is important</li> <li>• remuneration is dependent on your achievements</li> <li>• you live to work</li> <li>• extra remuneration is more valuable than free time</li> <li>• money and objects are important</li> <li>• ambition is important because it motivates to act</li> <li>• those who achieve success are admired</li> <li>• men are strong and aggressive; women who have achieved success are stronger and more aggressive than men</li> <li>• strength is the main attribute</li> <li>• conflicts are solved through confrontation of force</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a person does not have to conquer, caring functions are equally important, having a career is a free choice of both sexes</li> <li>• a larger proportion of women in labour market</li> <li>• a person is more important than social roles, division on the basis of gender is not stressed</li> <li>• humanization of work means more interpersonal relations and co-operation</li> <li>• quality of life is important</li> <li>• remuneration according to the principle of equality</li> <li>• you live to live</li> <li>• free time is more valuable than extra remuneration</li> <li>• money and objects are not the most important</li> <li>• friendly interpersonal relations are important</li> <li>• those who did not manage to achieve success are not discredited</li> <li>• both men and women are gentle, sensitive, warm, they equally share household and workplace duties</li> <li>• personal charm is an important attribute</li> <li>• conflicts are solved through compromise and negotiations</li> </ul>

Source: own study based on: Hofstede, 2007, p. 159.

In relation to the masculinity/femininity dimension, cultures which are called masculine determine values such as: success, ambition, assertiveness, self-confidence and competition. Femininity on the other

hand is defined by: concern for others and care giving, giving each other the sense of safety and emotional support. In culturally masculine societies there is a clear division into masculine and feminine roles, open display of ambition is accepted, male domination is undisputed. However, in culturally feminine societies free choice of masculine and feminine roles is accepted and mutual dependence between the two genders is stressed. It means less fixed division of social roles, not only on the basis of gender, but also race, nationality and age.

Norms and values which constitute this dimension influence first of all the way of motivating the employees, but also organisational culture and the management style (table 2) (Mazur, 2015).

**Table 2. The influence of culture on the way of work and the management method in the masculinity and femininity dimensions**

	Masculinity	Femininity
Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• challenges are important, motivating and ambitious work gives a sense of personal satisfaction</li> <li>• respected values: constant development, achievements, income</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• stability and sense of security are important</li> <li>•</li> <li>• respected values: good relationships, pleasant atmosphere at work, security</li> </ul>
Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• autocratic style of management</li> <li>• the company's interest justifies the interference in the sphere of private life</li> <li>• great importance of the measurement of the results</li> <li>• managers should be firm and aggressive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• democratic style of management</li> <li>• the company should not enter the sphere of personal life</li> <li>• less importance of the measurement of the results</li> <li>• managers should follow their intuition and strive for agreement</li> </ul>

Source: own study based on Hofstede, 2007, pp. 159–270.

In the cultures of higher level of femininity the supervisor should take care of the good atmosphere at work overcoming arising conflicts. This dimension is very significant in choosing the management method because it relates to management through communication. The supervisor respects employees' opinions. The measures of success are good rela-

tions in the organisation and effective cooperation. On the other hand, in the cultures of high level of masculinity, the supervisor is expected to be firm and resolute and should make decisions by themselves. The best person for this position is someone who can make decisions independently on the basis of facts rather than someone who organises group discussions to find out what employees think before making a decision. If a conflict arises, it should be solved through confrontation, friction or domination rather than through concession and looking for compromises. For the employees financial gratification is more important than the atmosphere at work (Mazur, 2012, pp. 136–137).

## 2. Masculinity-femininity dimension in Polish and Ukrainian national cultures

National culture, understood as one of the environment dimensions, influences the way of functioning of the entities within it. It is especially visible nowadays when the enterprises involved in running business in international markets come across different national cultures. These cultures form the values, norms and behaviours of employees and contractors of international companies (Rozkwitalska, 2008, p. 241). The identification of cultural patterns is a complex process. The features of national cultures form in the context conditioned by history, geography and economy. The source of these values can be found in the tradition, religion or language. The knowledge of cultural patterns makes it easier to function in a given community. The most often indicated and analysed external factor determining the properties of organisational culture is the national culture (Mazur, 2012, p. 31).

Even without insightful analysis, essential differences between Ukraine and Poland can be noticed. Political events from 2014 and the beginning of 2015 confirm it. The Polish state is much more integrated than the Ukrain-

ian one. However, despite the diversity connected with language, political views, declaration of national affiliation, Ukraine shows some common features. Therefore, we can talk about both Polish and Ukrainian culture.

The analysis of literature shows that the Ukrainian culture is more feminine than the Polish one. Undoubtedly one of the main reasons for the differences is religion. In Ukraine the dominant religion is Orthodoxy whereas in Poland it is Catholicism. Basing on the review of the literature devoted to the features of Orthodoxy and Catholicism, we can conclude that the representatives of the Orthodox church value collectivism to a greater degree than the representatives of the Catholic church. They also demonstrate a bigger power distance than the followers of the Catholic church. The Orthodox have more features of a culture which is described as feminine, whereas the Catholics have the features of a culture described as masculine (Mazur, 2012). O. Kiś, W. Ahajewa, L. Taran, J. Kononenko, T. Marceniuk, O. Oksamytna, T. Hundorowa expose the feminist aspect in Ukrainian culture, which gained significance after Ukraine became independent<sup>1</sup>. A few feminist centres emerged: Kiev, Lvov, Odessa, Kharkiv. Each of them fought with the myth about Berehynia – a symbol of Ukrainian matriarchy. In reality, women while looking after the family, often took the roles of both men and women. They fought to ensure their families survival, they had a strong position, and yet they were not appreciated.

In relation to Polish culture in the dimension – masculinity and femininity – we deal with different index values. A. Lubecka is writing about Polish people as a culturally feminine society. J. Mikułowski Pomorski, referring to the study of students from the 1990s, also highlights the predominance of the feminine element in Polish culture (Mikułowski Pomorski, 1998, pp. 43–58). This opinion is contrary to the findings of G. Hofstede, according to which the factor of masculinity in Poland is 64. According to the data

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1. In order to get information about the problem of Ukrainian feminism, in-depth interviews with female journalists, writers, poets, interpreters, MPs, representatives of the world of science and business have been conducted (Kiev, January–March 2013).

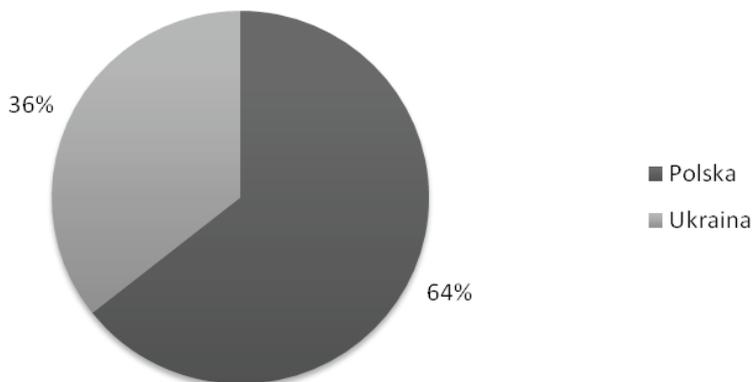
of GLOBE, it oscillates on the level of 53,57. A similar outcome – 51 – was reached by B. Mikuła and W. Nasierowski.

We can conclude that Polish society is set on masculine values and stressing gender differences a little more than the world average – 48. On the official website of G. Hofstede we can find values of indicators for the dimension of masculinity and femininity for Poland and Ukraine. The indicator for Poland is 64, for Ukraine it is 27. This means that Polish culture shows masculine features and Ukrainian culture shows more feminine features. The conclusions from both the analysis of literature and the interpretations of the results of the research carried out so far confirm that there are cultural differences between the two studied cultures.

### 3. The result of own study

In the research process quantitative method PAPI was used. The questionnaire was distributed among the employees chosen by the two companies. Their choices were intentional since it was necessary to obtain comparable results. The research was conducted simultaneously in both companies in February 2015. 200 employees from the two companies producing metal furniture were surveyed. The first company is in Poland in Suwałki, the other in Ukraine in Kharkiv. 184 questionnaires were analysed. The percentage distribution is presented in picture 1. Men constituted 87% of the surveyed, 13% were women. 37% of the people had higher education, 44% secondary education, 18% vocational education and only 1% primary education. 28% had a short length of service – up to a year, 32% between one and five years, 14% between five and ten years, 26% over ten years.

Figure 1. The structure of the sample depending on the location of headquarters



Source: own study.

Among the respondents, 64% were the employees of the Polish organisation and 36% were from the Ukrainian organisation. In the questionnaire the following statements were put:

- 1) **conquering:** a man should have the characteristics of a conqueror, women should perform the caring functions, which are less honourable / the caring functions are at least as honourable as the conquering functions;
- 2) **social roles:** social roles are very important: the ones connected with gender are fixed / humans are more important than social roles;
- 3) **quality of life:** in our work the result is most important / in our work quality of life is what counts, it is more important than the results achieved;
- 4) **attitude to work:** work is most important in human life / work is of little importance in human life;
- 5) **meaning of life:** you live to work / you work to live;
- 6) **importance in life:** money and objects are important / people and nature are important;

- 7) **independence:** one should pursue independence / people are dependent from one another;
- 8) **motivation:** ambition motivates action / serving other people motivates action;
- 9) **success:** those who have achieved success are admired: failures do not deserve attention / you feel empathy to those who fail;
- 10) **beauty:** large is beautiful / small is beautiful;
- 11) **speed of actions:** first come, first served / make haste slowly;
- 12) **dissimilarity of genders:** men are strong and aggressive; women who have achieved success are stronger and more aggressive than men / men and women are gentle, sensitive and warm;
- 13) **achievements:** achievements are defined within recognition and prosperity / achievements are defined within interpersonal relations and living environment
- 14) **working time:** people prefer higher wages over shorter working time / people prefer shorter working time over higher wages
- 15) **assets:** strength is the main asset / charm is an important asset.

If the person participating in the study identifies themselves with the statement on the left, they can choose from 1 (the highest level of identification) to 3 (the lowest level of identification) with the statement. If he / she identifies with the respective statement on the right, they can choose from 5 (the lowest level of identification) to 7 (the highest level of identification). The respondents for whom both statements are equally important put the sign x in the middle of the scale (4). In the static analysis a nonparametric test by U. Mann-Whitney was used for two independent samples. During the test the zero hypothesis is verified, which says that the studied arrangements do not differ from each other according to a hypothesis that the differences are significant. In the case where level  $p$  is lower than the adopted limit value (during the calculations it has been assumed that the limit value of the level of significance is 0,05), the zero hypothe-

sis should be rejected, which leads to the conclusion that there are significant differences between the answers of the people employed in the Polish organisation and the Ukrainian one (Gatnar, Walesiak, 2011). The results are presented in table 3.

**Table 3. Average ratings of the answers concerning masculinity-femininity depending on the location of the enterprise**

Indicators of masculinity-femininity	Average		Statistics Z	Level p
	Poland	Ukraine		
Conquering	4,429	3,806	2,208	0,027
Social roles	5,223	4,694	2,596	0,009
Quality of life	4,464	3,258	3,727	0,000
Attitude to work	4,134	2,726	4,406	0,000
Meaning of life	5,714	5,516	1,092	0,275
Importance in life	4,313	3,806	1,551	0,121
Independence	3,804	3,597	0,746	0,455
Motivation	3,107	3,161	-0,264	0,792
Success	3,866	3,290	2,124	0,034
Beauty	4,384	3,081	4,326	0,000
Speed of actions	4,768	4,032	2,429	0,015
Dissimilarity of genders	3,527	3,387	0,699	0,484
Achievements	3,911	3,694	0,943	0,346
Working time	3,455	2,871	1,727	0,084
Assets	4,384	4,452	-0,178	0,859

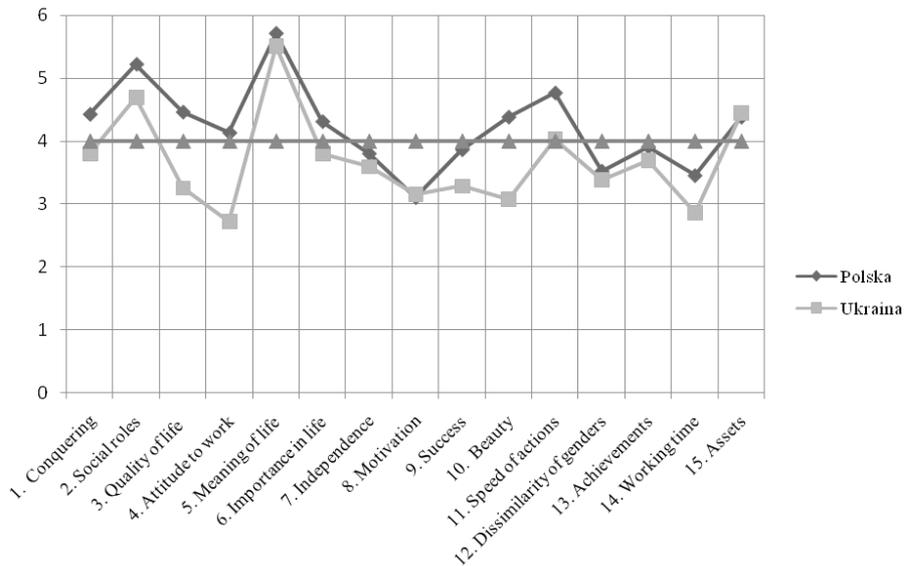
**Z – test by U Mann-Whitney**

Source: own study.

The distribution of the answers under the cultural assumptions referring to the dimension **masculinity/femininity** shows that there are statistically important differences between the groups in the categories: quality of

life ( $p = 0,00$ ), attitude to work ( $p = 0,00$ ), beauty ( $p = 0,00$ ), social roles ( $p = 0,009$ ), speed of actions ( $p = 0,015$ ), conquering ( $p = 0,027$ ), success ( $p = 0,034$ ). In the remaining cultural assumptions we can see smaller differences referring respectively to the categories: meaning of life, importance in life, independence, motivation, dissimilarity of genders, achievements, working time, assets (Fig. 2).

**Figure 2. Differences in cultural dimension of masculinity-femininity in groups of Polish and Ukrainian workers**



Source: own study.

In the group representing Polish national culture they identified themselves with the statement that a human is more important than social roles to a greater degree than in the group representing Ukrainian national culture. The caring functions are at least as honourable as the conquering functions. The respondents from the Polish company also identified themselves with the statement that in action the quality of life is what counts the most and it is more important than the achieved results. They found that

work is important, but not the most important in human life. People should not be judged by their success, we feel affection to those who failed. Size and quantity are not of great significance in the case of the respondents from the Ukrainian company.

In the group representing Ukrainian national culture they identified themselves strongly with the statement that social roles are very important. The man should have the characteristics of a conqueror and the woman should fulfil caring roles. They also found that in action the result is what counts the most and those who have achieved success are admired. Size and quantity are important. Their motto is: first come, first served. That means that the respondents from the Ukrainian company were set on achieving the goal.

In masculine cultures the role division is stressed, whereas in feminine cultures such a division is not approved of. In Ukraine the role division is strongly highlighted, however, occasionally women take over men's roles.

In light of the research results, significant differences in the organisational cultures of the companies can be seen. In the organisational culture of the Polish company the level of masculinity is a bit lower than in the organisational culture of the Ukrainian company. It shows that specific features of national culture (Polish, Ukrainian) are visible in the masculinity-femininity dimension in the organisational culture of the studied companies. This means that the way of managing, motivating or planning within the two companies should differ.

## Conclusions

In the organisational culture of the Polish company feminine features dominate whereas in the organisational culture of the Ukrainian company masculine features dominate. It is important to stress that the results of the study slightly differ from the data about the dimension of masculinity/femininity in Polish and Ukrainian cultures which were obtained from the analysis of the literature of the subject. It inclines that the research project should

be broadened and that studies should be carried out in companies in other sectors which are embedded within Polish and Ukrainian national cultures. Moreover, the research study shows differences referring to single subjects which do not allow us to formulate conclusions of general character. Nevertheless, the direction of further studies has been indicated.

The obtained results illustrate the view that in specific cultures different approaches to the differences between men and women are formed (see statements: 1, 2 and 12). The representatives of both cultures differ in their approach to discrepancies connected with gender. The respondents from Ukraine underline and promote clear differences between men and women, the respondents from Poland, however, minimise their significance. In the article this issue was merely mentioned. According to the author of this text, it deserves to be analysed in detail.

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