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## SIGNIFICANCE OF RESOURCES OF SOCIAL CAPITAL IN MANAGEMENT OF AN ENTERPRISE IN POLAND

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### ABSTRACT

This paper concentrates on the illustration of the significance of the resources of social capital in the management of an enterprise. The authors present the results of empirical research in terms of the significance of the resources of social capital, namely: participation, cooperation, solidarity, loyalty, norms and values, as well as social networks and trust in the management of enterprises. They have formulated three questions as follows: What is the scope of the occurrence of social capital in enterprises in Poland? Do differences exist in the level of social capital with regard to the magnitude of enterprises? In which area does social capital improve the ability of enterprises to develop economic activity, while simultaneously increasing their economic efficiency? In the search for answers to these questions the survey research method was applied. As a result of the research, the most significant resources of social capital in enterprises have been identified. Significant statistical relations between the attributes of the resources of social capital and the indicators of the effectiveness of enterprises have been indicated.

**Keywords:** Social capital, Social network, Organizational trust, Social capital resources, Enterprises.

### INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary economy, the success of an enterprise in the market is increasingly decided by intangible values. One of these is the skill of cooperation within employee groups and organisations with the aim of realising common interests. The aforesaid skill depends on the degree to which the particular organisation acknowledges and shares the same set of social norms and values. Sharing is to the benefit of building social capital which is of significant cultural value and economic value. The advantage of social capital is the faster flow of information and knowledge which results in the reduction of costs associated with the coordination of the aims executed. It results in the greater integration of employees and strengthens the ties with the enterprise as an institution and with its employees. Social capital has a positive impact on the growth of the effectiveness of enterprises. With relation to this fact, it is worth undertaking action in the area of building social capital. Its formation may be defined as the management of social capital which encompasses the sequence of the specified values and instruments that are availed of in building its elements, namely social networks, its attributes, e.g. involvement, solidarity, co-action and trust. The most important subject of this management is the manager who undertakes specified action in order to shape the resources of social capital.

By assuming that social capital has an impact on the effectiveness of an enterprise and therefore also on its market position, three research questions have been formulated as follows:

- What is the scope of the occurrence of social capital in enterprises in Poland?

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- Do differences exist in the level of social capital with regard to the magnitude of enterprises?
- In which area does social capital improve the ability of enterprises to develop economic activity, while simultaneously increasing their economic efficiency?

In the search for answers to these questions the survey method and questionnaire technique were applied.

## **SOCIAL CAPITAL IN AN ENTERPRISE - THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

The concepts of social capital are varied at the level of both conceptualisation and operationalisation. Numerous interpretations of this term result from various research perspectives. In analysing its definitions, it is possible to distinguish several ways to perceive it:

- firstly, as a set of actual and potential resources that are associated with the possession of a long-lasting network with greater or lesser institutionalised ties based on mutual familiarity and acknowledgement (Bourdieu, 1986);
- secondly, as the properties of collectivity: networks, norms and trust which facilitate coordination and cooperation in the name of mutual benefits (Putman, 1994);
- thirdly, as the norms and social relations embedded in the social structure that facilitate the cooperation of people with the aim of executing designated aims (Grootaert, 1998);
- fourthly, as institutions, relations and norms that have an impact on the quality and amount of social interactions (Halpern, 2005);
- fifthly, relating to the resources of other actors from whom an individual actor may benefit in terms of his/her own aims basing on the obligation or willingness of the associated actors to provide other actors with access to their resources (Iseke, 2007);
- sixthly, as a type of bond connecting society which involves trust, cooperation and networks (Yaghoubi, Salehi and Moloudi, 2011).

In all of these definitions, the focal points are held by networks, trust, norms and values constituting the basis of the functioning of society, including organisations. To conclude, social capital signifies a component of the skills of co-action and cooperation of individuals within the framework of social groups, organisations and social institutions of various types for the realisation of common goals (Fuchs, 2006).

In analysing social capital in an organisation, it is possible to distinguish internal and external approaches (Leana and Frits, 2006). The external approach places emphasis on the connections of the organisation with its external stakeholders. An organisation creates a network with external entities through which it avails itself of knowledge capital created by the network participants (Burt, 2000). In the internal approach, social capital is perceived as the form and nature of the social relations connecting the employees of a particular enterprise who have an impact on the creation of the vibe of cooperation. The ability to compete with other organisations is the function of both forms of social capital (Adler and Kwon, 2002). Social capital may be perceived as a resource or a process. In the former approach, social capital is a set of existing or potential resources of a productive nature that exist in the structure of an organisation. In the latter approach, social capital is activity and interaction between entities of an intangible nature (Skawińska, 2012). It is possible to divide this up into individual capital which is perceived to be the ability of individuals to acquire valuable tangible or symbolic goods by means of social relations (Prendergast, 2005) and collective capital as cooperation based on mutual trust, loyalty, solidarity, fair distribution of duties and gratification (Sztompka, 2015). Both of these variations of capital overlap into each other.

In an organisation, social capital may take on various dimensions. Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) describe three of its dimensions, namely: structural (ties between the members of the organisation); cognitive, or a common language (signs, symbols); and the relational dimension (norms of mutuality, trust). The structural dimension of social capital encompasses social networks, groups, structures and social institutions within which numerous configurations of ties between their participants exist. The cognitive dimension of social capital facilitates the building of a common cognitive perspective. Its elements, namely language and common values, define the ability to share explicit and tacit knowledge. The relational dimension of social capital relates to the resources that accompany the relations of two or more people. This facilitates cooperation between the team members that leads to increasing the amount of dialogue and joint communication (Schipper et al., 2007).

Social capital brings a multitude of benefits to an organisation. It may have a positive impact on the position of the firm in the market thanks to the transfer of knowledge acquired by means of participation in external networks and the spread of knowledge between the internal entities of the firm (Liu, Ghauri and Sinkovics, 2010). Organisational-knowledge sharing is facilitated by a social network, social trust and shared goals in a culture of trust, cooperation and participation (Bautista, May and Bayang, 2015). Social capital favours the sharing of knowledge via the provision of tacit and explicit knowledge, the exchange of knowledge and innovation in the team (Hu and Randel, 2014). Likewise, social capital also stimulates innovations, education, while also having an impact on work efficiency (Sztaudynger, 2007).

Social capital also brings benefits to employees in the form of building ties with the enterprise as an institution and with other employees. It also guarantees employees access to attractive resources, namely new knowledge and information, new competences, skills, support in difficult situations, and prestige.

## **SOCIAL CAPITAL IN ENTERPRISES IN LIGHT OF RESEARCH**

The problematic issues of social capital in enterprises is not a frequent subject of research on the management of enterprises in Poland. The authors of this paper have the intention of filling this gap by presenting the results of empirical research on the significance of the resources of social capital, e.g. participation, cooperation, solidarity, loyalty, norms and values, and also trust in the management of enterprises. The research was conducted in 2018 and was participated in by 149 enterprises, including 28 micro-sized enterprises (0-9 people), 38 small enterprises (10-49 employees) and 46 medium-sized enterprises (50-249 employees) and 40 large enterprises (250 workers and more). The selection of enterprises for research was based on the quota-purposive sampling method.

The concept of social capital in an organisation is still poorly prepared in a theoretical and empirical sense. There is a gap in terms of knowledge on the issue of specific indicators defining the level of social capital in an organisation. The authors of the herein paper have proposed a set of indicators that enable the identification of the attributes of the resources of social capital in enterprises. On the basis of the classification of Theiss (2005), the dimensions of social capital have been distinguished as structural, regulative and behavioural, within which resources have been identified. In Table 1 the results of research on the attributes of the resources of social capital have been presented. One of the most important points in the opinion of the researchers is cooperation, which is an element of behavioural social capital. Coleman (1988) indicated that the skill of interpersonal cooperation within the framework of groups and organisations facilitates the realisation of common goals. The research conducted by the authors of this paper indicates that the micro-sized enterprises evaluate this resource at the highest level (4.01), particularly sharing information, knowledge and learning from each other (4.30), as well as the frequent contact with managers in the search for new solutions to the tasks

commissioned for execution (4.03). The resource of co-action and cooperation was evaluated as relatively lower by the representatives of the remaining companies, albeit the differences between them are slight. In small firms, the frequency of contact with managers in the search for new solutions to the tasks commissioned for execution was evaluated at the highest level, whereas in medium-sized enterprises the use of knowledge from one area to resolve problems which emerge in another area of the firm was rated at the highest level, and in large companies sharing information, knowledge and learning from others are deemed to be at the highest level.

The skill of cooperation depends on the extent in which the particular organisation acknowledges and shares the set of norms and social values. Values constitute a significant resource of social capital as sharing by the members of the group facilitates cooperation between them. This resource was highly rated by the representatives of micro-sized firms (4.02) and large companies (3.85) by indicating that employees adhere to copyright laws and have respect for norms and values.

Loyalty belongs to the cognitive element of social capital which encompasses social norms and values. This is shown by being loyal towards the firm and co-workers, willingness to provide help to work colleagues and in keeping their word. In the analysed enterprises the most highly-rated attributes are associated with this resource in micro-sized and small enterprises, particularly in terms of loyalty towards the firm in which they work.

The regulative component of social capital is solidarity. In the analysed enterprises this is relatively lower in terms of evaluation than the remaining resources. This particularly relates to the attribute of placing the general good over one's own which is assessed at a low level. The degree of occurrence of the resource of solidarity is varied, depending on the size of the enterprises. Solidarity exists to the greatest extent among the employees of micro-sized firms, whereas to the lowest extent among large enterprises.

The lowest rated resource of social capital is that of participation which belongs to the structural element of social capital. On the one hand, it encompasses the sense of belonging of employees to informal groups, mutual informal contacts at the workplace, as well as participating in integration events, whereas on the other hand, membership of trade unions. In this sphere, significant differences occur in terms of the degree of their evaluation due to the magnitude of the enterprise. The attributes of this resource are rated at the highest level in large enterprises but at the lowest level in micro-sized enterprises.

**Table 1. Evaluation of attributes of social capital of cooperation, participation, solidarity, loyalty and value of employees in enterprises**

Attributes of resource	Total	Micro-sized firms	Small firms	Medium-sized firms	Large firms
Resource of cooperation	3.81	4.01	3.77	3.71	3.75
Employees share information, knowledge and learn from each other	3.93	4.30	3.78	3.77	4.00
Employees apply knowledge from one area for resolving problems which emerge in another area of the company	3.67	3.96	3.51	3.78	3.51
Employees make frequent contact with managers in the search for new solutions to the tasks commissioned for execution	3.82	4.03	3.86	3.75	3.72
Majority of employees possess skill of cooperation	3.82	3.92	3.84	3.74	3.85
Employees are creative in resolving problems at work	3.71	3.93	3.83	3.51	3.65

Resource of solidarity	3.31	3.66	3.34	3.27	3.07
Employees show solidarity with other colleagues at work	3.54	3.89	3.48	3.49	3.38
Employees place common good over their own	3.05	3.41	3.13	2.98	2.79
Employees are ready to take risks in activities	3.18	3.40	3.21	3.27	2.89
Employees are featured by ethicality in terms of relations with other employees	3.46	3.92	3.51	3.36	3.20
Resource of participation	3.17	3.02	3.20	3.15	3.25
Employees participate in integration events willingly	3.70	3.63	3.78	3.64	3.74
Employees create informal groups based on cooperation	3.26	3.00	3.19	3.27	3.49
Employees are in the majority of cases members of trade unions	2.54	2.44	2.62	2.55	2.54
Resource of loyalty	3.65	3.94	3.69	3.54	3.52
Employees are loyal to each other	3.50	3.85	3.51	3.34	3.43
Employees are loyal to the company where they work	3.57	4.00	3.79	3.56	3.38
Employees are ready to help other employees	3.78	3.96	3.78	3.73	3.72
Employees are amiable and cordial to each other	3.73	3.96	3.79	3.73	3.58
Resource of value	3.78	4.02	3.67	3.67	3.85
Majority of employees have respect for norms and values	3.74	4.01	3.62	3.67	3.77
Majority of employees accept dissimilarity of co-workers	3.67	3.95	3.59	3.51	3.74
Employees adhere to copyright	3.92	4.11	3.78	3.84	4.02

*\*Scale between 1 and 5. Source: authors.*

Multiple researchers perceive social networks as the most important resource of an organisation. Lin (2001) embedded resources in social relations that improve the results of activities. The authors of the research adopted a resource-based approach for the analysis of social networks. With the aim of the identification of the degree of occurrence of social networks in the analysed enterprises, indicators were created on the basis of the frequency of mutual formal and informal relations between employees and between managers and employees (Table 2). The general indicator of networking for the enterprises under analysis amounted to 5.73 on a scale of 1 to 10 (in which 1 signifies a lack, whereas 10 signifies great frequency or closeness of ties). Analysis of this type of indicator with regard to the magnitude of the enterprise indicates that significant differences are prevalent. Social networks exist in micro-sized enterprises (6.17) to the greatest extent, while also in large enterprises (5.91), albeit to the lowest degree in small firms (5.31). This results from the specifics of enterprises, in micro-sized firms with regard to the low number of people employed, employees enter into direct relations while conducting tasks, thus creating a type of social network. In turn, in large firms, employee teams are created which are focused on conducting specific tasks whose realisation requires cooperation and co-action. A social network favours the realisation of tasks in employee teams.

A detailed analysis of the indicators of networks in the analysed enterprises illustrates the differences in the degree of occurrence of formal and informal ties. Indicators of formal ties achieved a relatively higher value, i.e., the frequency of contact of an employee with other employees with whom (s)he has worked in the past year (7.59) and the frequency of contact of an employee with other employees with relation to business matters (7.17) rather than the indicators of informal ties, namely the frequency of contact of an employee with other employees after work, e.g. going out to a restaurant or pub together (4.49) and the closeness of ties between employees (4.91).

A significant role is played by the manager in social networks. In accordance with the models of networks prepared by Burt (2000), managers are becoming important elements of social networks. In the research, the authors indicate the significance of the function fulfilled by the manager in social networks composed of employees and managers, namely the frequency of contact with managers, to whom they may turn for assistance or advice (7.15) and the closeness of ties of employees with the manager (6.37).

**Table 2. Indicators of social networks in analysed enterprises**

Indicators of social networks	Total	Micro-sized firms	Small firms	Medium-sized firms	Large firms
Frequency of contact of an employee with other employees with whom he/she cooperated over the past year	7.59	7.67	7.05	7.75	7.87
Frequency of contact of an employee with other employees with relation to professional issues	7.17	7.81	6.24	7.17	7.59
Frequency of contact of an employee with other employees after work (get-togethers for dinner in a restaurant, supper or in a pub)	4.49	4.85	4.16	4.4	4.68
Closeness of ties of employees with other employees	4.91	5.70	4.43	4.47	5.35
Frequency of contact with managers to whom they can refer to for assistance or advice	6.49	7.15	6.12	6.78	6.02
Closeness of ties of employees with the manager	5.08	5.92	5.08	4.73	4.89

*Scale of values from 1 to 10, in which 1 signifies a lack, while 10 signifies high frequency or close relations. Source: authors.*

Another resource of social capital is that of trust which is perceived to be the conviction that a partner will take our interests into consideration only when we have taken his/her interests into account prior to this in the form of our activities. In the research of the authors, an identification of the level of trust towards co-workers and managers has been conducted (Table 2). Analysis of the research results indicate that the general level of trust in the analysed enterprises attained the value of 3.61 on a scale of 1 to 5, whereby 1 signified very low trust and 5 very high trust. Simultaneously, significant differences exist between the sizes of enterprises. The highest level of trust occurred in micro-sized firms (3.88), while the lowest in large firms (3.40). Detailed analysis of the general indicators of trust illustrates the prevalence of differences in their scale. Employees place greater trust in their managers (3.60) than in their co-workers (3.40). Relatively speaking, employees place their highest level of trust in the enterprises where they

work (3.76). Hence, institutional trust is at a higher level than horizontal trust (towards other employees). Similar results were gained in other research projects of trust in enterprises in Poland, whereby institutional trust was at the level of 3.80 and horizontal trust at the level of 3.57 (Krot and Lewicka, 2016, p. 107). A variable indicating differentiation for the analysed population of the enterprises with regard to the level of trust in employees was that of the magnitude of the enterprises (Table 2). The Gamma correlation coefficient between the level of trust in managers and the majority of employees and the size of enterprises amounted to  $\Gamma = -0,190$   $p = 0,013$ . A high level of trust was illustrated in micro-sized enterprises and in medium-sized enterprises, while the lowest in large enterprises. Hence, the greater the enterprise, the lower the level of trust in managers. Likewise, the level of trust in employees is associated with the magnitude of the enterprises ( $\Gamma = -0,240$ ,  $p = 0,002$ ). In this case, great differences were shown in terms of the level of trust between micro-sized enterprises and large enterprises.

**Table 3. Evaluation of level of trust of employees in analysed enterprises**

Specification	Total	Micro-sized firms	Small firms	Medium-sized firms	Large firms
Trust in other employees	3.40	3.81	3.40	3.29	3.23
Trust in managers	3.60	3.82	3.64	3.69	3.33
Trust in company	3.76	3.96	3.76	3.78	3.61
Trust in owner of company	3.65	3.92	3.54	3.80	3.41
General trust	3.61	3.88	3.58	3.64	3.40

*\*Scale between 1 and 5. Source: self-analysis*

Analysis of the impact of the resources of social capital, namely, cooperation, participation, solidarity, loyalty and values on the effectiveness of the analysed enterprises indicates the occurrence of ties that are statistically significant (Table 4). The resources of values and loyalty have the greatest impact on the positive financial performance. In turn, the resources of values and cooperation have an impact on the growth of revenues. Growth in the value of equity capital is dependent on the resources of participation and cooperation. The resources of values and participation have first and foremost an impact on the growth in value of assets. The resources of cooperation and values have an impact on the growth in market value of an enterprise. The resources of values and solidarity have first and foremost impact on higher profits. The increase in productivity is influenced by the resources of cooperation, values and solidarity. By way of conclusion, the greatest impact on the effectiveness of enterprises is exerted by the resources of cooperation and values. However, the lowest impact was noted in the case of the resource of loyalty.

**Table 4. Gamma correlation between indicators of resources of social capital and indicators of effectiveness of enterprise**

	Positive financial performance	Growth in revenue	Growth in value of equity capital	Growth in value of assets	Growth in market value	Greater net profit	Growth in productivity
Sharing information, knowledge	0.395	0.398	0.363	0.326	0.405	0.354	0.447

Application of knowledge from one area for resolving problems in another area	0.255	0.203	0.200	0.200	0.285	0.285	0.372
Frequent contact with managers in resolving tasks	0.327	0.371	0.276	0.250	0.404	0.280	0.443
Possession of skills of cooperation	0.228	0.267		0.201	0.196	0.351	0.351
Being creative in resolving problems	0.229	0.201		0.189	0.199	0.278	0.224
Solidarity with work colleagues	0.294	0.315	0.289	0.289	0.353	0.441	0.427
Placing general good over one's own	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.237	0.216	0.271	0.321
Readiness to undertake risk in operations	0.168	0.243	0.248	0.339	0.283	0.295	0.321
Ethicality in relations with other opponents	0.335	0.276	0.196	0.299	0.382	0.382	0.399
Participation in integration events	0.2778	0.361	0.327	0.359	0.356	0.391	0.332
Participation in informal groups	0.00	0.152	0.301	0.310	0.195	0.183	0.214
Loyalty with regard to others	0.264	0.232	0.176	0.205	0.209	0.278	0.294
Loyalty with regard to company	0.262	0.242		0.217	0.191	0.331	0.317
Readiness to help others	0.413	0.333	0.245	0.289	0.334	0.369	0.396

Goodwill and cordiality with regard to others	0.439	0.365	0.251	0.285	0.387	0.389	0.380
Respect for values and norms	0.389	0.319	0.176	0.338	0.318	0.374	0.410
Acceptance of dissimilarity of co-workers	0.408	0.422	0.344	0.347	0.434	0.444	0.464
Adherence to copyright	0.439	0.446	0.298	0.321	0.395	0.433	0.357

$p < 0,01$ . Source: authors.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The results of the research conducted have facilitated the definition of the scope of occurrence of the attributes of the resources of social capital in the analysed enterprises. Analysis of the results of empirical research indicates that the attributes of the resources of social capital appeared in the analysed enterprises to a greater or lesser extent. One of the important elements of structural social capital is that of social networks composed of only employees or employees with managers. The network of employees was featured by a relatively intense closeness of ties between employees resulting from the frequent professional contact at the workplace. Employees more seldom entered into informal relations with other employees. However, networks composed of employees and managers were based on formal relations between employees and managers, while there was frequent contact with managers who were approachable for assistance and advice, while also relatively great closeness of ties between the employees and the manager. The participation of an employee in social networks with other members of an organisation creates the situation in which cooperative ties are formed on the basis of mutual trust and cooperation (Bylok et al., 2017). Social networks more often occurred in micro-sized enterprises and in large enterprises than in small and medium-sized enterprises.

The resource which is associated with social networks to a significant extent is that of trust. It has an impact on the scope of access to the tangible and intangible resources and the possibility of availing of them. In the analysed enterprises, the highest level of trust was noted in the case of vertical trust, namely towards enterprises and their owners, albeit, horizontal trust, namely towards employees, was significantly lower. Simultaneously, the general level of trust achieved the highest value in micro-sized enterprises. This may result from the fact of the small number of people employed, direct communication and the necessity to cooperate in the execution of tasks.

In analysing the impact of the attributes of the resource of social capital on the effectiveness of enterprises, it was indicated that the resource of values is a significant factor in its growth. In the analysed enterprises, the following values are rated the highest: honesty, responsibility, loyalty with relation to other employees, loyalty with relation to the firm and solidarity with other employees. However, the least valued is placing the general good over one's own. On the basis of the research results, it is possible to come to the conclusion that values have a substantial impact on the positive financial performance, growth of productivity and growth in the value of the enterprise.

As illustrated in the research, the level of resources of social capital is varying, depending on the magnitude of the enterprise. The results of the analysis indicate that the highest level occurred in the micro-sized and large enterprises.

The authors of this paper wish to indicate the restrictions in terms of the use of the research results on social capital in enterprises resulting from the magnitude of the sample and research methods applied. The research was conducted with the use of the survey method with a questionnaire technique that was aimed at outlining the intricate problematic issues of social capital in organisations and shall constitute a starting point for further research on its function in contemporary enterprises.

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