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Organisational Culture as Factor Determining the Level of Trust in an Organisation

Abstract: The first purpose of the paper was to present the results of author's own empirical research devoted to assessing the present and expected organisational culture model in Polish SME sector employees' opinion. Another key research objective was to assess occurrence of some statistically significant dependencies between the declared model of the organisational culture and the perception of the present level of respondents' trust in relation to their line managers and colleagues. Two research tools were used in the research process: the Organisational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI) by Cameron and Quinn and the author's own questionnaire to assess occurrence and intensity of any dysfunctional phenomena at the work place[1]. Statistical analyses of significant differences between variables were conducted with Pearson's chi square test of independence. As a result of analysing the factual material gathered during the research, it became clear that a model of the organisational culture does not have a statistically significant impact on the level of trust in colleagues while it affects trust towards line managers in all types of analysed enterprises.
Key words: determinant, organizational culture, SME sector, model, trust

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[1] This paper presents only a small portion of rich factographic material gathered as a result of running a project entitled: "Organisational Culture Models Versus Workplace Pathologies." The lack of trust has been treated as the one of 29 possible dysfunctions.

Introduction

As claimed by Sprenger [2011, p. 12] trust is an extremely passionate issue since it is related to many aspects of the economy: with facilities and contracts entered into, with the shape given to relationships, with collaboration and management, with the concept of the economy of speed, innovation, credibility and commitment. For this reason, trust is one of the three–next to power and money–powerful factors of enterprise management. Confirmation of the above–quoted opinion can be also found in views of other authors who claim that the ability to shape, develop and rebuild trust in everyone: clients, business partners, investors and colleagues–is the key leadership competence in the conditions of new global economy [Covey, Merrill 2013]. Unfortunately, in spite of the great importance attributed to the role of trust in business dealings, the world struggles with a global crisis of trust: "Once successfully out of the global financial crisis, enterprises and organisations worldwide found themselves in a crisis which is much deeper and more destructive. It is the crisis of trust. The progressing erosion is a major issue in countries whose prosperity depends on the rapid growth and creative spirit, so cherished in capitalism. It is a particularly difficult challenge for companies whose activity is based on a daily exchange of proofs of trust with clients, consumers, stakeholders or shareholders (...). Trust is like air we breathe – if we have it enough no one notices it but we all start to see it when it's lacking" [Covey, Link, Merrill 2013].

Trust is an incredibly inspiring research category displaying many new fields of scientific exploration. The key objective of this paper was to expose the role of the organisational culture as the determinant of the level of trust inside an organisation, with a particular emphasis on the level of trust in colleagues and line managers. To achieve the above–described objective, the author carried out self–designed empirical research to answer a number of leading questions:

• What is the existing model of an organisational culture in the analysed enterprises, considering their size?

• What model of an organisational culture is declared ideal/desirable by employees?

• Are there any convergences or divergences in assessing respondents' preferences as to the existing and their desirable model of organisational culture in enterprises of different sizes?

• Is there any statistical dependence between models or the organisational culture, declared as the currently existing in individual types of enterprises and the level of trust that respondents have in their colleagues?

• Is there any statistical dependence between models or the organisational culture, declared as the currently existing in individual types of enterprises and the level of trust that respondents have in their line managers?

The presented dependencies were referred, separately, to microenterprises, small, medium-sized and large enterprises.

Organisational culture – ambiguity of the notion

Organisational culture is one of the scientific categories which causes a great deal of trouble to researchers. Occasionally, it is called "personality of an organisation", "the philosophy which drives the policy of an organisation", "the core of values which define the philosophy or mission of a company", "customary and traditional ways of thinking and acting", "the organisational climate", "symbols, language, ideologies, rituals, myths", "values, standards, knowledge", "patterns of thought processes" and "speech or jargon" [Zbiegień-Maciąg 1999, p. 17; Srokowski 2011, p. 26; La Montagne 2016, p. 9; Wudarzewski 2013, pp. 59–78]. It is also called "the tool of domination and oppression, hyposthasy and ideology, a pseudoscientific component and fashion or even a mental prison [Sułkowski 2011] as well as "one of the main sources of pathology in social behaviour" [Tarnowska 2011, p. 74].

Ambiguity of definitions, which arise from renewed attempts at defining what the organisational culture does not facilitate understanding of its essence by business practitioners, often resulting in a choice of an attitude manifesting total ignorance of its importance. However, the attitude is a loss of a number of advantages. Many authors claim that the organisational culture does not leave desired performance of people and enterprises unaffected [Neagu, Nicula 2012; Weare, Lichterman, Esparza 2014]. Rules of conduct, standards and values arising from the organisational culture determine both the effectiveness for formulating the company's strategy, effectiveness of change management processes as well as the effectiveness of motivational processes [Altaf 2011; Harrington, Voehl 2015], also the level of trust [Dani, Burns, Bachhouse, Kochnar 2006; Lewicka 2012]. Organisational culture preserves motives of organisational behaviours. An adequately strong culture may well stimulate employees to creativity and innovation, it may also encourage them to take risk [Saad, Asaad 2015]. Employees who share values and behavioural standards as well as conduct and ways of thinking preferred by a culture will be, to a largest extent, identified with enterprises for which they work, more engaged in solving its problems. The organisational culture model existing in an organisation may then substantially support effectiveness of management in the organisation and its employees but it may also effectively disrupt the organisation [Eaton, Kilby 2015; Harrington, Voehl 2015; La Montagne 2016]. It is interesting whether the organisational culture determines also the level of employee trust in their line managers and colleagues in SME sector, what the author perceives as gap research. This has been the subject of the proprietary research whose results are presented in this article.

Trust – complexities of interpretation

Trust is a broad concept encompassing both internal trust (trust between colleagues, trust between employees and managers, trust in IT) and external trust (in vendors, business partners, etc.) [Zhang, Tsui, Song, Li, Jia 2008]. In the literature, other types of trust are also mentioned e.g. vertical, horizontal, system–related, structural, large, small, personal, positional, commercial, emotional and knowledge–related [Bugdol 2010; Tan, Tan 2000; Wziątek–Staśko, Lewicka 2008]. The number of categories is extensive, but it is not the range of categories which is the concern here. The point is to define trust and explain potential consequences of its erosion [Sousa-Lima, Caetano 2013]. Sprenger, a German management guru, observes a rather intriguing rule: "(...) I haven't met a manager who wouldn't consider trust the key element in dealings with employees. I haven't met a single speaker who would not claim that trust is the key to setting value and performance orientation for enterprise policy. What is more, I haven't read a management manual which wouldn't explain all potentially achievable positive financial effects through the prism of trust. But I haven't met a single person who could explain to me what trust really is" [Sprenger 2011, p. 9]. The author emphasises that "the deficit of knowledge about the essence of trust comes from the fact that, so far, they were considered factors explaining the cooperative attitude and not a phenomenon that required to be explained. The above shows that trust was treated as explanans (a factor explaining a described phenomenon) and not as explanandum (a factor or a phenomenon being explained). And both have as much in common as a mole in the chin and a mole digging in the soil". The above–mentioned author, in his effort to understand the essence of trust, asks many intriguing questions: "What is trust then? What is it all about? Is it an impression, a moral attitude, a whim dating back to all good times, a fashionable term from the field of enterprise management, a common stereotype about a problem-solving method, a rhetorical trick which helps to disclose the power ruling technique to camouflaging geniuses, a magic charm preventing getting into some dangerous gear or perhaps a contribution to a motivational blabla assisting the sphere of our professional work as a fly which persistently accompanies a grazing cow?" [Sprenger 2011, pp. 9–11]. Similar views are also expressed by other authors who claim that, in daily practice of enterprises, the notion of "trust" remains a slogan said with conceit, arrogance and in expectation of an applause but, at the same time, aimed at evoking the feeling of guilt in those who have not been yet showing trust in their environment. The word "trust" tends to be thrown when something important in an enterprise does not function as it should [Hawley 2014; Acedo, Gomila 2013; Campellone, Kring 2013; Colledge, Morgan, Tench 2014]. Trust occupies an increasingly prominent position in the area of interest for management sciences. Currently, the notion is mentioned when debating new enterprise management paradigms and

the role of its intangible asset components. Trust gains particular importance in the context of changes occurring in the environment of contemporary organisations, in the era Web 2.0+. Transforming world and potential global scale co-operation with the support of the cloud, e-communication, e-commerce, e-leadership, e-recruitment and selection, e-resources, e-business, continue to trigger immense care about such delicate and subtle phenomenon as trust [Wziątek-Staśko 2016; Żądło 2014; Malthotra, Lumineau 2011]. According to Paliszkiewicz [2013, pp. 162–163], the nature of trust is overwhelming and penetrates all human activities, it is a component of his entire life experience. The importance of trust for organisation's success cannot be undermined. It is necessary when facing immense multitude of meanings, uncertainty, complexity (...). It affects innovative actions and supports innovation. It is an important element of collaboration, it develops and sustains it as it promotes exchange of information, enriches relations, causes growing openness and mutual acceptance, supports conflict-solving. Trust has a huge impact on joy of teams and organisations defined as employee satisfaction and capacity of an enterprise to attract and keep talents [Ji, Zhou, Li, Yan 2015; Sellaro, Hommel, De Kwaadsteniet, Van de Groep, Cozato 2014]. Bugdol [2010, p. 130] claims that "trust is a long-term investments". Unfortunately, many contemporary enterprises are inexhaustible layers of suspicion. Deeply rooted distrust which tries to put on a mask of reason turns top managers into order keepers and managers into policemen patrolling their district (...). Lack of trust is a poison which paralyses everyone [Sprenger 2011, p. 25; Lu, 2014].

Research objective and methods applied

The author's own empirical research was aimed at evaluating the existing and desirable model of the organisational culture in the opinion of Polish employees. It was interesting to verify whether such model is dependent on the size of the enterprise: micro (less than 10 employees), small (10–49), medium (50–249), and also large (250 and more). Another research objective was to assess occurrence of some statistically significant dependencies between the declared model of the organisational structure and the level of employees' trust in relation to their superiors and colleagues. Two research tools were used in the research process:

• the Organisational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI) by Cameron and Quinn [Cameron, Quinn 2003];
• the author's own questionnaire to assess occurrence and intensity of any dysfunctional phenomena at the work place, including the present level of trust (29 questions followed by the respondents' characteristics).

Statistical analysis of significant differences between variables were conducted with Pearson's chi square test of independence. A significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$ was assumed for the test.

Anonymous empirical research on a randomly selected sample of respondents from the Silesian Region was run from April 1, 2016 to November 30, 2016, with the paper (hard) copy of both research instruments. In total, 700 copies of questionnaires were handed out to respondents; 664 complete and correctly filled out forms qualified to be analysed eventually. The structure of respondents is presented in table 1.
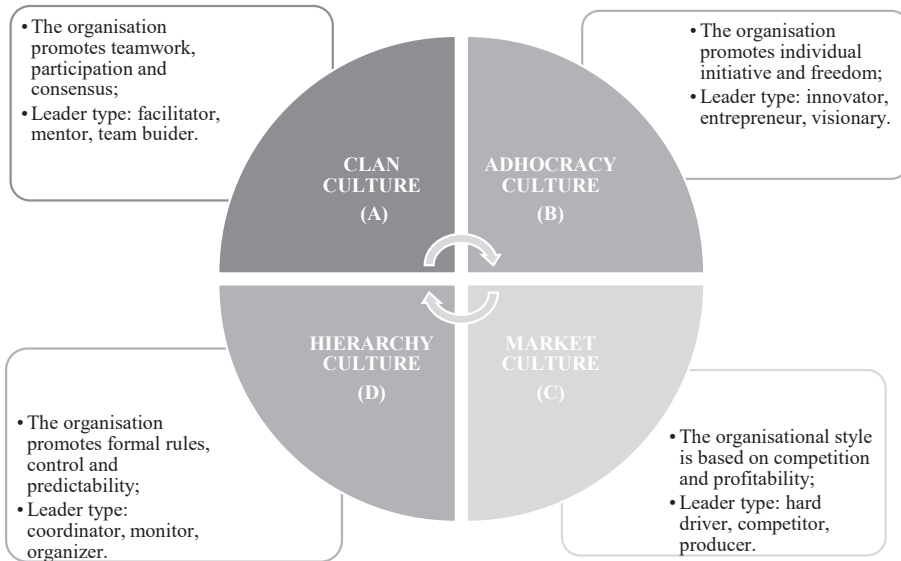
Table 1. The respondents' characteristics

The respondent's characteristic		Respondents in numbers (N)	Respondents in percent (%)
Sex:	women	347	52.2
	men	317	47.8
Age:	18-25	337	50.8
	26-35	170	25.6
	36-45	124	18.7
	46-55	30	4.5
	55 and more	3	0.5
Education:	elementary	1	0.15
	vocational	6	0.9
	high	530	79.8
	university	126	19.0
	academic/scientific	1	0.15
Position:	blue collar workers	246	37.0
	non-blue collar workers with no managerial responsibilities	296	44.6
	lower level managers	31	4.7
	medium level managers	71	10.7
	top level managers	20	3.0
Work experience:	less than 5 years	328	49.4
	5-15 years	202	30.4
	more than 15 years	134	20.2
Sector:	private	526	79.2
	state	117	17.6
	third sector	2	3.2
Enterprise size:	micro	99	15.0
	small	127	19.1
	medium	152	22.9
	large	286	43.0

Source: own study.

The model of the organisational culture used for researching for the purpose of this paper is the Competing Values Framework developed by Cameron and Quinn, presented in figure 1.

Figure 1. Competing Values Framework developed by Cameron and Quinn

- The organisation promotes teamwork, participation and consensus;
- Leader type: facilitator, mentor, team buider.

CLAN CULTURE (A)

ADHOCRACY CULTURE (B)

- The organisation promotes individual initiative and freedom;
- Leader type: innovator, entrepreneur, visionary.

HIERARCHY CULTURE (D)

MARKET CULTURE (C)

- The organisation promotes formal rules, control and predictability;
- Leader type: coordinator, monitor, organizer.

- The organisational style is based on competition and profitability;
- Leader type: hard driver, competitor, producer.

Source: own study based on: Cameron, Quinn 2003.

Research results presentation

The first goal of the research was to diagnose the type of the organisational culture predominant in the organisations employing respondents. The "current" and "desirable' models of the organisational culture were identified with OCAI Questionnaire developed by Cameron and Quinn. The factographic material for the issue discussed in this part of the paper is presented in figure 2 and figure 3.

According to the data in figure 2, the models of cultures, indicated by respondents as those existing currently, are different depending on the type of enterprise they apply to. In micro– and small enterprises, the clan culture ranked as the dominant model

of culture (30.6% and 29.5%), the hierarchy culture in medium-sized enterprises (31.0%) and the market culture in large enterprises (also covered by the research for the sake of comparison (33.0%). Preferences as to the model of the organisational culture indicated by respondents as their "desirable" model are presented in figure 3.

The picture presented on the figure 3 reflects a very interesting condition–according to the majority of respondents, the most desirable model of organisational culture, irrespective of the size of their organisation, turned out to be the clan culture (above 39.0%) and the least desirable was the market culture (at 17%). The discrepancy seems rather significant. Preferences for the other two models of culture ranged between (21.0% –22.0%). In this case, respondents' opinions seem astonishingly consistent.
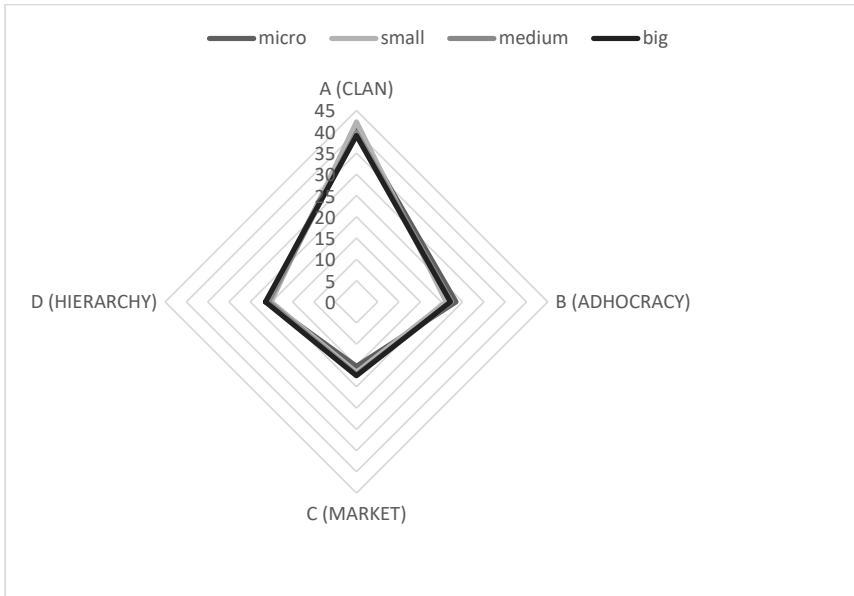
Figure 2. The existing organisational culture model in micro, small, medium and big enterprises
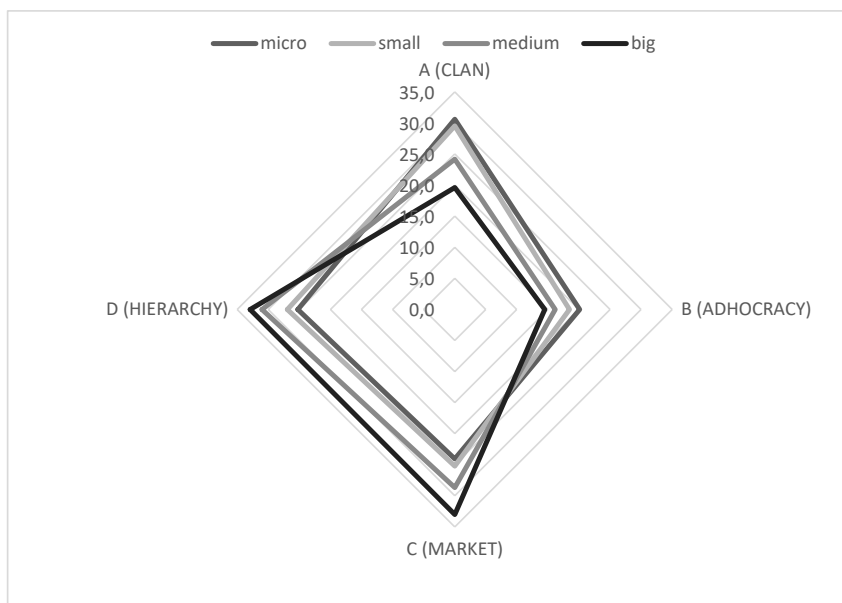
Source: own analysis.

Figure 3. The expected organisational culture model in micro, small, medium and big enterprises

Source: own analysis.

Therefore, when answering question number two: "Does the size of an enterprise have an impact on differences in evaluation of the current and desirable model of organisational culture by respondents?", note that, when evaluating the "current" model, a difference was noticeable while in case of preferences for the "desirable" model, such differences were practically not identified.

The second research goal was to check whether the model of the organisational culture, declared as the currently existing, affect the level of trust in line managers and colleagues, declared by respondents, considering the size of an organisation. For the purpose of diagnosing the level of trust, respondents used Likert's scale (1 to 5, where 1 indicated their critically low level of their trust, 5– very high level of trust and 2 to 4– average levels). Presented below are the conclusions from the author's analysis of the data collected in the research:

• There is no statistically significant dependency between the following research categories: "the model of the organisational culture currently existing in the organisation" and "the level of trust in colleagues subjectively experienced by respondents". The results are presented in table 2.

Table 2. Level of trust in colleagues and the organisational culture model–the results of Pearson's chi square test of independence

Enterprise size	micro	small	medium	large
	p- value			
the level of respondents' trust in colleagues	0,2768	0,1616	0,0675	0,3976

Source: own analysis.

The above shows that the model of the organisational culture does not affect the level of trust in colleagues declared by respondents.

• There is a statistically significant dependency between the following research categories: "the model of the organisational culture currently existing in the organisation" and "the level of trust in superiors subjectively experienced by respondents" – for all types of enterprises. The results are presented in table 3.

The model of the organisational culture of the enterprise affects the level of trust in line managers declared by respondents. The dependence, discussed here in detail, by categories of enterprises, is presented in figures 4 to 7.

Table 3. Level of trust in superiors and the organisational culture model – the results of Pearson's chi square test of independence

| Enterprise size	micro	small	medium	large
	p- value			
the level of respondents' trust in superiors	0,0049**	0,0006***	0,0001***	0,0380*

Source: own analysis.

Figure 4. Trust in line managers according to employees in microenterprises

Source: own analysis.
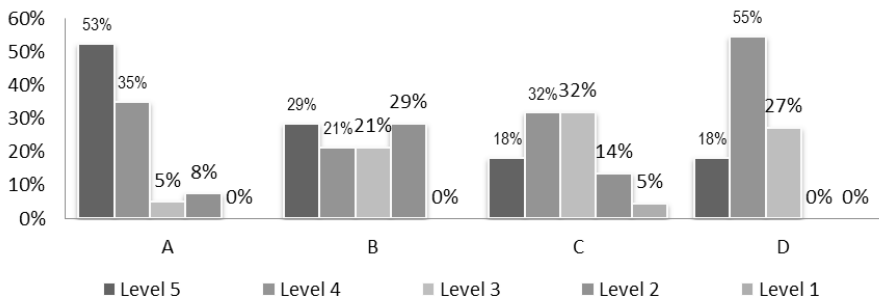
According to the data presented in figure 4, in microenterprises, the highest trust in line managers was declared by employees working in a clan culture type of an organisation – A (53% of score 5, 25% of score 4) and a hierarchy type of culture (55% of score 4 but as only as little as 18% of score 5). Organisations with the adhocration type of culture – type B, and the market type of culture – type C responded differently (with 50% of score 4 and 5 but as much as 29% with the score of 2 and 50% of score 4 and 5 but 14% scored 2 and as much as 5 scored 1, respectively).

Figure 5. Trust in line managers according to employees in small enterprises
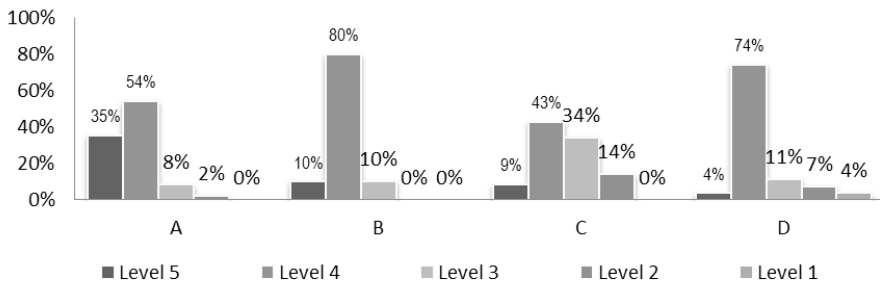
Source: own analysis.

In case of small enterprises, employees working for the clan type of culture organisation – A and the adhocration culture – B have the biggest trust in their line managers (with 35% for the score 5 and 54% at 4, respectively and jointly 90% scoring 4 and 5). A situation similar to the situation in the adhocration type of culture organisation occurred in organisations with hierarchic type of culture (D) (in total, 78% of the top scores but also 11% of scoring 2 and 1). As in the case of microenterprises, the lowest trust in line managers was declared by employees working in market types of culture – C (as little as 9% of score 5 and 14% at 2). In this case, respondents' scoring showed the greatest differentiation.

Figure 6. Trust in line managers according to employees in medium-sized enterprises
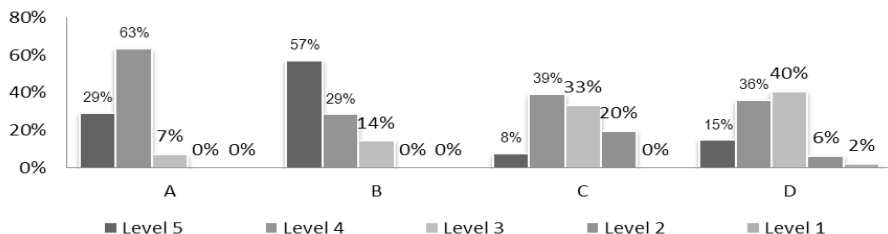
Source: own analysis.

The factographic material illustrated in figure 6 shows that the organisations with clan type of culture (A) (92% of score 4 and 5) and the adhocration type of culture (86%, respectively) have the highest level of trust in line managers, which is confirmed by the trend showed in the previously discussed types of enterprises. The results are different for organisations with hierarchic type of culture (D) – in this case, there are considerably fewer top scores than in the above-mentioned types of organisations. Market culture-based organisations (C) demonstrated again a large differentiation of scoring, with a particular indication of the highest share of the score of 2.

Figure 7. Trust in line managers according to employees in large enterprises
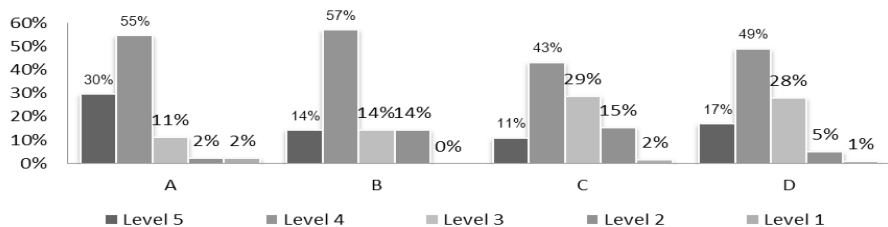
Source: own analysis.

In the case of large enterprises, the model of the organisational culture which is the most supportive for an increase of trust in line manager was again the clan culture – A (85% of scores at 4 and 5) and the adhocration culture (at 71%, respectively). The lowest scoring at 1 and 2 prevailed (4% for the clan culture, 14% for the adhocration culture, 17% for the market culture and 6% for the hierarchic culture).

Conslusions

The key objective of this paper was to expose the role of the organisational culture as the determinant of the level of trust inside an organisation, with a particular emphasis on the level of trust in colleagues and line managers. My analysis of collected factual material led to an answer to the questions listed at the beginning of the presented article and brought forward the following conclusions:

• The dominant model of the organisational culture, indicated as "the currently existing" model differs depending on the size of an enterprise. In micro- and small enterprises, the clan culture ranked as the dominant model of culture (30.6 and 29.5, respective), while in medium-sized enterprises the dominant culture with the culture of hierarchy (30.1) and the culture of the market in large enterprises (33.0).

• The most "desired" model, according to respondents from all types of enterprises, irrespective of their size, was the clan culture model (40.1) while the market culture model was the least desired one (16.8). Convergence of preferences in this area seems extremely interesting.

• The model of organisational culture which the respondents declared was "the existing one" clearly departs from the "desirable" model. To the largest degree, the above applies largely to large and medium-sized enterprises. However, note that even in the enterprises showing consistency (between the existing and the expected model), the percentage of respondents choosing the clan culture as the model they desired was higher than before.

• The dependence between "the existing" model of the organisational culture and the level of trust in colleagues proved not statistically significant. The trend is shown for all types of enterprises. It signifies that the model of the organisational culture does not affect the level of trust in colleagues. The conclusion is particularly interesting.

• The dependence between "the existing" model of the organisational culture and the level of trust in line manager proved statistically significant. The trend is shown for all types of enterprises. It signifies that the model of the organisational culture affects the level of trust in line managers.

• An analysis of the collected factographic material shows that the biggest trust in line managers is declared by employees in clan type (A) culture organisations, irrespective of the type of enterprise. Similar is the case of organisations demonstrating the adhocration culture (type B). The organisation in which an employee may count on support from his line manager who creates friendly work environment supports the growth of trust in line managers.

- In small enterprises, the narrowest distribution of scoring was reported, with scoring 4 and 5 given most often irrespective of the type of an enterprise.
- The largest number of respondents claiming that their level of trust in line managers was low or critically low – scoring 1 and 2 – was reported for market culture type organisations (C). Unfortunately, the exposure of financial performance at the expense of what is truly important to employees results in a clear decrease of trust in line managers.

Considering the immense importance of trust in the process of improving the quality, effectiveness and efficiency of management, it is worthwhile to make the effort to identify values considered the key values for employees. Work in an environment whose characteristics is considerably different from that important to people will always cause some degree of dissatisfaction, leading to reduced trust and, consequently, lower motivation and commitment. In the context of the above-presented deliberation, it is worth to continue the effort of exploring this topic, going towards the diagnosis of reasons for absence of trust in line managers and analysing manager's trust in their reports and managers' trust in other managers in different types of enterprises.

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