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Motivation as a Driving Force for Achievement in Micro and Small Enterprises: Differences from the Gender Perspectives

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Abstract:

Purpose: *The aim of the research is to compare the impact of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation on the performance of companies established by women and by men.*
Design/Methodology/Approach: *The study involved a random sample of 32 micro and small enterprises led by women and 58 enterprises run by men. The research was conducted in Poland, using a questionnaire-based interview, in the south-eastern part of the Wielkopolskie Voivodship. The research covered the period from 2020 to 2022. Empirical data were compiled using the STATISTICA software. To examine the strength of the relationship between variables, the non-parametric gamma rank correlation method was applied.*
Findings: *The study demonstrated that the influence of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation on the performance of female- and male-led enterprises differs. The performance of women-led enterprises is more strongly influenced by factors related to intrinsic motivation than those related to extrinsic motivation. In contrast, in men-led enterprises, the impact of both types of motivation is similar.*
Practical implications: *The findings may be useful to the business community, academia, and policymakers. For policymakers, they provide arguments for supporting both women's and men's entrepreneurship, particularly in countries with similar cultural contexts and economic development levels to Poland.*
Originality/value: *By offering a new perspective on the motivational factors influencing women and men in relation to enterprise performance, the article fills a gap in the literature and serves as a basis for further research.*

Keywords: *Extrinsic motivation, intrinsic motivation, female entrepreneurship, male entrepreneurship, micro and small enterprises, enterprise performance, Poland.*

JEL codes: *D190, D910, Z00, Z190.*

Paper type: *A research paper.*

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1. Introduction

Entrepreneurial motivation has a significant impact on the development, management style, and performance of enterprises. It is important to understand the motivations of both female and male entrepreneurs in order to promote and inspire entrepreneurship. In Poland, for example, women are playing an increasingly prominent role in entrepreneurial activity.

An analysis conducted by the business intelligence agency Dun & Bradstreet indicates that, by the end of 2021, 32.5% of companies in Poland were owned by women. Furthermore, in 2023, Poland had one of the highest proportions of mature businesses in the population across Europe, and at the same time one of the lowest gender gaps in this category.

Poland is among the countries where the relative gender gap diminishes as entrepreneurial activity increases. In 2023, the share of individuals running mature businesses was 10.9% for women and 12.4% for men (Report, 2024). One of the factors influencing a company's market presence, growth, and performance is the motivation behind its founding.

Most research on the impact of motivation on business growth, success, or outcomes focuses on entrepreneurs in general (Srimulyani and Hermanto, 2022). There are significantly fewer publications addressing this issue from a gender perspective. Focusing research on the similarities and differences in motivational factors affecting the performance of businesses run by women and men provides practical benefits, as it enables the adaptation of government tools and policies to support entrepreneurs.

According to self-determination theory (Deci and Ryan, 2013), motivation can be classified as extrinsic or intrinsic. Extrinsic motivation results from stimuli outside the individual, including both material and non-material rewards provided by other people, institutions, or the market. Such motivation is described as "pull." Intrinsic motivation stems from personal, intrinsic factors such as values and interests, and thus arises from needs and drives.

This type of motivation is referred to as "push." Previous research on motivation has concentrated on similarities and differences between women and men in the process of founding their own businesses.

According to earlier studies, men are more strongly motivated by extrinsic factors (Gatewood, Shaver, and Gartner, 1995), while for women, emotional factors linked to intrinsic motivation play a more important role (Choukir and Hentati, 2013). These findings are supported by the research of Veena and Nagaraja (2013).

Based on these previous studies, the following hypotheses were formulated:

- Hypothesis 1: The influence of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation on business performance differs between enterprises run by women and those run by men.
- Hypothesis 2: The performance of women-led enterprises is more strongly influenced by factors related to intrinsic motivation than those related to extrinsic motivation.
- Hypothesis 3: The performance of male-led enterprises is more strongly influenced by factors related to extrinsic motivation than those related to intrinsic motivation.

The following factors were classified as extrinsic motivation: favourable market conditions, lack of other opportunities, dissatisfaction with previous employment, lack of development prospects, unemployment, parental example, family arrangements, flexible working hours, and crisis.

The intrinsic motivation category included, the pursuit of independence, intrinsic drive to act, the need for adequate income, the desire to be one's own boss, the ambition to achieve personal goals, the need for dominance, the desire to prove one's worth, risk inclination, and values instilled in the home environment.

The selection of these motivational factors was based on earlier research conducted in Poland in 2002 (PARP, 2002). The present study was conducted in mature enterprises run by both women and men. This justifies the use of a set of factors aligned with the period in which the businesses were established.

The analysis is based on survey data collected by students of the University of Kalisz in the south-eastern part of the Wielkopolska region. The interviews referred to the period from 2020 to 2023 and were conducted with 32 women and 58 men managing micro and small enterprises.

2. Literature Review

Research on the impact of motivation on business performance varies in terms of research scope, subject focus, sets of motivational factors, and definitions of enterprise performance. Most studies have examined entrepreneurs as a whole, regardless of gender. In Germany, a study involving 2,306 individuals explored the effect of so-called start-up motivation on business performance, measured by business survival, income, and employment growth (Kumar and Kalyani, 2011).

The authors grouped motivational factors into four categories: motivational index, opportunity, career ambition, and necessity. They found that a higher motivational index was associated with better business outcomes, including firm survival, income, and growth-oriented indicators such as job creation, innovation, and expansion. Similar research was conducted in the Netherlands, where the impact of start-up motivation on business performance was measured in terms of annual

turnover (de Vries, Liebreg, and van Stel, 2020). The findings of both studies were consistent with those of Indonesian researchers (Hartati *et al.,* 2024).

A separate study in Malaysia, involving 181 entrepreneurs, examined the influence of "push" and "pull" motivation on entrepreneurial success (Yong *et al.,* 2024). Entrepreneurial success was found to be more strongly associated with "pull" than with "push" motivation (Norena-Chavez and Thalassinos, 2022; Cristea *et al.,* 2022).

Research conducted in Java among 575 SME owners examined the effect of entrepreneurial motivation on firm performance (Srimulyani *et al.,* 2023). The authors defined entrepreneurial motivation as the fulfilment of financial, social, service-related, and self-fulfilment goals. In contrast, company performance was assessed in both financial and non-financial terms, with findings indicating that stronger entrepreneurial motivation was associated with improved performance.

Similar conclusions were reached in studies on the food and beverage sector, which confirmed the relationship between entrepreneurial motivation and SME success (Srimulyani and Hermanto, 2021). Another study, conducted in Indonesia with a sample of 770 entrepreneurs, investigated the impact of intrinsic motivation on business performance (Rani and Desiana, 2019). The results confirmed that intrinsic motivation influences organisational outcomes.

A second stream of research has focused specifically on women's entrepreneurship. The findings on how motivation affects business outcomes are presented here in chronological order of publication. A study of 144 small businesses in the Madurai region of India demonstrated the influence of specific motivational factors—such as the ambition to become an entrepreneur and the desire for independence—on business outcomes (Kumar and Kalyani, 2011).

Key performance indicators included amount of capital invested, average sales turnover, average net profit. Another Indian study from 2013, involving 147 female entrepreneurs, identified a relationship between motivational factors—such as "Ambition", "Skills and Knowledge " and "Independence"—and business success (Krishnamoorthy and Balasubramani, 2014).

A study in Valencia, Spain, explored the relationship between entrepreneurial motivation (propensity for risk, finding a work–life balance, desire to develop business skills, need to seek self-employment, and desire to earn more than in paid employment) and business survival (Rey-Martí, Porcar, and Mas-Tur, 2015).

The strongest predictor of business survival was propensity for risk. In China, Li and Setiawan Sanusi (2023) found that among 160 female entrepreneurs, "push" motivations influenced financial success, while "pull" motivations were more closely associated with non-financial performance. In Albania, motivations such as

the "desire for independence" and the ability to "work from home" were shown to affect business performance (Kraja and Berberi, 2023). In Indonesia, "work–life balance" was found to significantly influence the outcomes of women-led businesses (Nurhalisa *et al.,* 2024).

There is a notable lack of research examining the influence of motivation on business outcomes from a gender perspective. One such study investigated gender differences in entrepreneurial motivation and their impact on entrepreneurial success (Fisher, Reuber, and Dyke, 1993).

This Canadian study, conducted in 1996, considered not only financial motivation but also lifestyle and social motivations. Entrepreneurial success was assessed using indicators such as annual sales, annual income, income per employee, sales per employee, income per owner, and margin. The authors found that women displayed stronger financial motivation than men when starting businesses, even though financial motivation had only a moderate impact on individual performance metrics. A similar study was conducted in Tanzania (Nchimbi, 1999).

In summary, the vast majority of research on the impact of entrepreneurial motivation on business performance has focused on either all entrepreneurs or on women. Moreover, most of these studies have been conducted in Far Eastern countries (Malaysia, India, Pakistan, China), whose distinct economic and cultural contexts significantly influence entrepreneurial motivation.

There is a lack of up-to-date research on the influence of motivation on business outcomes from a gender perspective that takes into account conditions similar to the Polish economic and social environment. This study therefore addresses a notable gap in the literature.

3. Research Methodology

Business performance is defined as a high level of satisfaction with economic and financial results, engagement in online sales, successful applications for EU funding (i.e. receipt of EU grants), and a high degree of innovation. Satisfaction with economic and financial outcomes was measured using a Likert scale, based on the following indicators: satisfaction with profit (1–5), financial liquidity (1–5), sales value (1–3), and financial result (1–3).

Online sales were assessed based on the degree of satisfaction with e-commerce activity, rated on a scale from 1 to 5. Receipt of EU funding was measured using a binary scale (0–1), and the level of innovation was assessed on a 1–5 scale.

To examine the influence of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation on the selected indicators of business performance, empirical data were processed using the STATISTICA software. Due to the small sample size and the qualitative nature of

most variables, the strength of the relationships between variables was tested using the non-parametric gamma rank correlation.

4. Research Results and Discussion

4.1 Characteristics of Examined Companies

The majority of female respondents managed micro-enterprises (82%), with only 19% leading small businesses. In contrast, companies led by men were larger: 47% were classified as small enterprises and 53% as micro-enterprises. In terms of sectoral structure, most female-led enterprises operated in the service and trade sector (81.4%), followed by transport (9.3%) and manufacturing (9.3%).

The women surveyed ran businesses such as confectioneries, florists, accounting offices, and hair and beauty salons—sectors typically associated with female entrepreneurship. Male respondents most often operated service and trade businesses (62%) in areas such as automotive services, metal processing, and IT.

There was also a higher proportion of male-led manufacturing enterprises (22%) in industries such as furniture production, industrial automation, blind manufacturing and installation, packaging production, and transport services (15.7%)—sectors typically associated with male entrepreneurship. The size and sectoral structure of the surveyed businesses reflected the general distribution of enterprises in Poland.

According to data from PARP (2024), 97% of all enterprises are micro-enterprises and 2.1% are small businesses. In terms of sector, 75% operate in services and trade, while only 9.3% are industrial companies.

Female business owners were more highly educated than their male counterparts (59.4% held higher education degrees, compared to 44.8% of men) and had greater managerial experience. Prior to founding their own businesses, 40.6% of the women had held managerial positions in other companies, compared to 29.3% of men.

Slightly more women (53%) than men reported that their business was aligned with their formal education. Both groups similarly addressed gaps in managerial competence by participating in training courses in their respective industries, as well as in management and accounting.

In the 2022 study, the average female entrepreneur was 48 years old, managed a business employing 4.6 people on average, which had been operating for more than 11 years, and in most cases (87.5%) had founded the business herself. One in three women had dependent children.

The average male entrepreneur was 45.8 years old, managed a more mature firm (15.5 years), and employed 15.3 people on average. Most of the firms were

established from scratch (79%), while 17% were inherited. A majority of male respondents (75%) also had dependent children. Thus, the typical female entrepreneur founded her business at around age 37, when she had already raised her children and accumulated the capital necessary to start a business.

4.2 The Influence of Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivation for Starting a Business on Company Performance

In accordance with the objective of this study, the relationship between extrinsic and intrinsic motivational factors and business performance indicators was examined. Company performance was represented by seven indicators encompassing financial and non-financial performance. The most significant motivational factors were those found to be statistically correlated with all business performance measures.

Table 1. *Correlations between extrinsic motivation and business performance in women-led enterprises (n=32).*

Factors	Satisfaction with profit	Satisfaction with financial liquidity	Satisfaction with sales value	Satisfaction with financial result	Satisfaction with profits from online sales	Level of innovation	EU funding received
Favourable market conditions	-0.329 p=0.129	-0.059 p=0.832	0.425 p=0.062	0.408 p=0.067	-0.167 p=0461	-0.610 p=0,542	-0.364 p=0.161
Flexible working hours	0.224 p=0,292	**0.695 * p=005**	-0.342 p=0.129	-0.179 p=0.423	0.235 p=0.814	-0.006 p=0.979	0.000 p=1.000
Dissatisfaction with previous job	-0.136 p=0.568	0.318 p=1.036	0.063 p=0.801	-0.045 p=0.185	-0.065 p=0.796	-0.170 p=0.435	**-0.545* p=0.028**
Parental example	0.506 p=0,086	0.269 p=0.509	0.119 p=0.688	0.186 p=0.528	0.226 p=0,513	0.348 p=0.252	0.226 p=0,513
Family arrangements	-0.190 p=0.530	**-0.846* p=0,01**	-0.286 p=0.290	-0.238 p=0.386	0.279 p=0.293	0.056 p=0.839	**-1.000* p=0,040**
Lack of other opportunities	-0.137 p=0.739	1.000 p=0.112	0.468 p=0.271	0.520 p=0.201	**-1.000 * p=0.037**	-0.406 p=0.231	0.053 p=0.907
Unemployment	-0.310 p=0.392	-0.105 p=0.814	-0.143 p=0.726	-0.040 p=0.922	**-1.000* p=0.037**	-0.552 p=0.089	0.053 p=0.907
Lack of development opportunities	0.375 p=0.856	-0.105 p=-0.235	0.458 p=0.271	-0.040 p=-0.098	0.027 p=0.060	0.123 p=0.322	**0.680* p=0.048**

Source: *Own research. Statistically significant correlation at p< 0.05 is marked with an asterisk (*) and in bold.*

When discussing the influence of extrinsic motivation in women-led enterprises (Table 1), only two factors—flexible working hours and lack of development opportunities—positively affected a single indicator of business performance. Flexible working hours were positively correlated with satisfaction with the company's financial liquidity, while lack of development opportunities was correlated with receipt of EU funding. This indicates that, in the case of women-led enterprises, only two factors within the scope of extrinsic motivation were significantly correlated with a single measure of business performance. The influence of flexible working hours on business outcomes in women-led firms is confirmed by the study by Nurhalisa *et al.* (2024).

Table 2. *Correlations between intrinsic motivation and business performance in women-led enterprises (n = 32)*

Factors	Satisfaction with profit	Satisfaction with financial liquidity	Satisfaction with sales value	Satisfaction with financial result	Satisfaction with profits from online sales	Level of innovation	EU funding received
Striving for independence	-0.119 p=0.436	**0.616* p=0.011**	**-0.613* p=0.010**	-0.456 p=0.072	0.189 p=0.482	0.187 p=0.455	0.081 p=0.806
Intrinsic drive to act	-0.103 p=0.637	-0.103 p=0.706	**-0.529* p=0.018**	-0.291 p=0.187	0.255 p=0.264	0.040 p=0.851	0.200 p=0.455
Need to fulfil personal ambition	0.283 p=0.204	-0.067 p=0.807	**0.557* p=0.009**	**0.627* p=0.002**	0.108 p=0.634	**0.468 p=0.029**	**0.525 p=0.032**
Need for decent income	0.255 p=0.264	**0.762* p=0.006**	0.296 0.206	0.208 p=0.375	-0.273 p=0.239	-0.282 p=0.183	-0.235 p=0.401
Desire to be one's own boss	-0.263 p=0.218	0.229 p=0.469	-0.306 p=0.218	-0.394 p=0.098	0.276 p=0.240	-0.076 p=0.743	0.067 p=0.821
Values instilled at home	0.167 p=0.647	-0.419 p=0.357	**1.000* p=0.040**	**1.000* p=0.033**	0.316 p=0.473	0.317 p=0.471	-1.000 p=0.161
Propensity for risk	0.375 p=0.633	**-0.917* p=0.030**	1.000 p=0.154	1.000 p=0.138	1.000 0.026	**-1.000* p=0.037**	-1.000 p=0.330
Desire to prove one's worth	-0.826 p=0.130	**-09.17* p=0.030**	1.000 p=0.154	1.000 p=0.138	-1.000 p=0.244	1.000 p=0.190	-1.000 p=0.309

Source: *Own research. Statistically significant correlation at p< 0.05 are marked with an asterisk (*) and in bold.*

In women-led enterprises, the most important intrinsic motivational factor influencing business performance was the need to fulfil personal ambition (see Table 2). This motivation was positively correlated with satisfaction with sales value, financial result, level of innovation, and receipt of EU funding. Another significant motivation was values instilled at home, which correlated with satisfaction with both sales value and financial result.

Additionally, the need for decent income and the desire for independence were positively correlated with satisfaction with the company's financial liquidity. Of particular interest are the negative correlations observed between propensity for risk and both financial result satisfaction and declared innovativeness.

Similarly, the desire to prove one's worth was negatively associated with innovativeness. These two factors appear to have a demotivating effect in the context of women-led enterprises. The findings of this study are consistent with earlier research that identified "the need to fulfil personal ambition" as an important driver of business performance in women-led enterprises (Krishnamoorthy, Balasubramani, 2014), as well as "the need for decent income" (Kraja and Berberi, 2023) and "desire for independence" (Kumar and Kalyani, 2011).

To verify Hypothesis 2, the influence of factors determining intrinsic motivation versus extrinsic motivation on business performance in women-led enterprises was compared. Among intrinsic motivators, a greater number of factors were statistically significantly correlated with various aspects of business performance than among factors included in extrinsic motivation (Tables 1 and 2).

Table 3. *Correlations between extrinsic motivation and performance in male-led enterprises (n=58).*

Factors	Satisfaction with profit	Satisfaction with financial liquidity	Satisfaction with sales value	Satisfaction with financial result	Satisfaction with profits from online sales	Level of innovation	EU funding received
Favourable market conditions	**0.357* p=0.040**	**0.519* p= 0.004**	**0.376* p=0.029**	0.312 p=0.071	0.190 p=0.250	**0.420* p=0.010**	0.161 p=0.446
Flexible working hours	**0.550* p=0.000**	**0.429* p=0.020**	0.082 p=0.625	0.145 p=0.379	**-0.316* p=0.038**	-0.138 p=0.353	0.059 p=0.758
Dissatisfaction with previous job	-0.251 p=0.144	0.006 p=0.976	**-0.453* p=0.004**	-0.228 p=0.183	0.183 p=0.255	-0.219 p=0.294	-0.238 p=0.196
Parental example	0.069 p=0.678	0.006 p=0.976	0.308 p=0.102	0.100 0.577	0.050 p=0.767	0.083 p=0.613	**0.734* p=0.000**
Family arrangements	-0.213 p=0.351	-0.319 p=0.174	**-0.590* p=0.002**	**-0.449* 0.028**	-0.203 p=0.320	-0.220 p=0.289	**-0.670* p=0.019**
Lack of other opportunities	**-0.518* p=0.013**	-0.379 p=0.096	-0.296 p=0.171	0.093 p=0.401	0.185 p=0.328	-0.340 p=0.105	-0.340 p=0.220
Unemployment	-0.118 p=0.802	0.889 p=0.230	-0.016 p=0.973	-0.289 p=0.466	-0.325 p=0.423	0.481 p=0.266	-1.000 p=0.128
Lack of development opportunities	0.310 p=0.206	0.414 p=0.223	**-0.437* p=0.048**	-0.364 p=0.102	0.087 p=0.704	-0.429 p=0.069	0.200 p=0.469

Source: *Own research. Statistically significant correlation at p< 0.05 are marked with an asterisk (*) and in bold.*

The most relevant intrinsic motivation factors included: the need to fulfil personal ambition, values instilled at home, the need for decent income, and the desire for independence. In summary, the presented findings confirm the hypothesis that intrinsic motivational factors have a greater influence on business performance in women-led enterprises.

In men-led enterprises, the most influential extrinsic motivation influencing business performance was favourable market circumstances (Table 3). This motivation positively influenced satisfaction with profit, satisfaction with liquidity and the level of innovation.

Another important factor was flexible working hours, which showed a positive correlation with satisfaction with profit and financial liquidity. A third relevant motivational factor was parental example, which was positively associated with the receipt of EU funding. The important role of flexible working hours as a factor influencing business performance has also been confirmed in prior research among entrepreneurs conducted by Kumar *et al.* (2011).

Table 4. *Correlations between intrinsic motivation and performance in male-led enterprises (n=58)*

Factors	Satisfaction with profit	Satisfaction with financial liquidity	Satisfaction with sales value	Satisfaction with financial result	Satisfaction with profits from online sales	Level of innovation	EU funding received
Striving for independence	-0.060 p=0.744	-0.406 p=0.063	**-0.493* p=0.015**	-0.037 p=0.847	0.069 p=0.690	-0.123 p=0.445	**-0.627* p=0.000**
Intrinsic drive to act	-0.052 p=0.743	0.076 p=0.696	**0.367* p=0.033**	**0.388* p=0.029**	**0.304* p=0.047**	-0.142 p=0.341	0.031 p=0.841
Need to fulfil personal ambition	0.205 p=0.214	-0.304 p=0.112	0.041 p=0.822	-0.123 p=0.340	0.060 p=0.710	0.142 p=0.350	0.077 p=0.701
Need for decent income	0.156 p=0.322	**0.569* p=0.002**	**-0.375* p=0.018**	-0.069 p=0.679	-0.004 p=0.980	-0.048 p=0.749	0.005 p=0.978
Desire to be one's own boss	0.270 p=0.108	-0.058 p=0.771	**-0.507* p=0.002**	**-0.385* p=0.020**	**-0.373* p=0.024**	**-0.406* p=0.007**	**-0.446* p=0.029**
Values instilled at home	0.069 p=0.739	-0.237 p=0.311	**0.479* p=0.044**	0.370 p=0.103	-0.367 p=0.098	0.062 p=0.739	**0.725* p=0.000**
Propensity for risk	-0.114 p=0.607	0.005 p=0.984	**0.741* p=0.007**	0.417 p=0.092	0.194 p=0.326	0.193 p=0.357	0.076 p=0.778
Desire to prove one's worth	-0.121 p=0.718	0.109 p=0.787	-0.534 p=0.056	-0.458 p=0.115	0.236 p=0.387	0.337 p=0.226	0.333 p=0.325

Source: *Own research. Statistically significant correlation at p< 0.05 are marked with an asterisk (*) and in bold.*

The key intrinsic motivations positively correlated with business performance in men-led enterprises included intrinsic drive to act, the need for decent income, values instilled at home, and propensity for risk (Table 4).

The intrinsic drive to act was associated with three performance indicators: satisfaction with sales value, financial result, and online sales. The need for decent income was positively correlated with satisfaction with financial liquidity, while values instilled at home were associated with satisfaction with sales and the receipt of EU funding. The propensity for risk, in turn, had a positive influence on sales value in male-led enterprises.

Conversely, the desire to be one's own boss emerged as a demotivating factor, showing a negative correlation with all performance indicators. Among the intrinsic motivation factors influencing business performance, the following confirmed previous research: values instilled at home (Eijdenberg *et al.,* 2015), intrinsic drive to act (Kisker and Wilken, 2016), and the need for decent income (Caliendo *et al.,* 2023).

To verify Hypothesis 3—which assumed that extrinsic motivation would have a stronger influence than intrinsic motivation on the performance of male-led enterprises—the results presented in Tables 3 and 4 were compared. Among extrinsic motivational factors, those significantly correlated with performance included favourable market conditions, flexible working hours, and parental example.

Factors representing intrinsic motivation significantly correlated with performance measures included intrinsic drive to act, values instilled at home, and propensity for risk. A similar number of intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors were found to significantly influence selected business performance indicators. Therefore, it may be concluded that in male-led enterprises, both types of motivation have a comparable impact on performance.

The findings support Hypothesis 1, which proposed that intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors affect the performance of women- and men-led enterprises differently. The differences related to the sets of motivational factors and the specific performance indicators with which they were associated. For men, the important extrinsic motivations were favourable market conditions, flexible working hours, and parental example. For women, these were lack of development opportunities and flexible working hours (Tables 1 and 3).

Flexible working hours in women-led enterprises were associated with satisfaction with financial liquidity, whereas in male-led ones they were additionally linked to satisfaction with profit. Key intrinsic motivation for women included: the need to fulfil personal ambition, values instilled at home, the need for decent income, and the desire for independence. For men, they were, intrinsic drive to act, the need for decent income, values instilled at home, and propensity for risk.

It is worth noting that values instilled at home and the need for decent income were correlated with different performance measures depending on gender. It is difficult to compare these findings in terms of differences in intrinsic and extrinsic motivation with those of other studies on gender differences in motivational impact, primarily due to differing classifications of motivational factors.

This study adopted the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic factors based on Deci and Ryan (2013). The classification of specific motivational factors was also aligned with previous studies conducted in Poland. However, many authors use alternative categorisation criteria, resulting in different sets of variables included under intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

5. Conclusion, Proposals, Recommendations

This study confirmed Hypothesis 1, which proposed that the influence of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation on business performance differs between enterprises run by women and those run by men.

It also confirmed Hypothesis 2, namely that the performance of women-led enterprises is more strongly influenced by factors related to intrinsic motivation than those related to extrinsic motivation.

Intrinsic motivation such as the need to fulfil personal ambition, values instilled at home, the need for decent income, and the desire for independence influenced more performance indicators than extrinsic motivation such as favourable market conditions and flexible working hours.

Hypothesis 3, which proposed that extrinsic motivation would have a stronger influence than intrinsic motivation on the performance of male-led enterprises, was not confirmed. The results indicated that both types of motivation exert a similar influence on selected performance indicators.

The majority of previous studies focus on gender differences in motivations to start a business. In contrast, there is a lack of research on gender differences in the impact of motivation on business performance. This study helps to fill that gap.

Nonetheless, the study has certain limitations related to sample size and regional scope. A larger sample would enable the application of more advanced statistical techniques. Furthermore, the study was limited to micro and small enterprises operating in a single region—south-eastern Wielkopolska. The local context may have influenced the results.

Future research should aim to examine the impact of economic, social, and legal conditions on motivation and business performance in women- and men-led enterprises.

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