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**Leader vs team member
- Differences in equality
and hierarchical
individualism and
collectivism - the context
of public and private
organisations**

1. Introduction

Individualism and collectivism are terms describing social phenomena that are different conceptions of how to perceive and function in the world. They are expressed in terms of the individual's relationship to the group and the obligations that arise from participation in the group and in forming relationships with its representatives.

Individualism has been linked to independence, the pursuit of individual goals and desires, competition, and a focus on one's own unique qualities. Collectivism, on the other hand, has been linked to relationality and treating loved ones as an integral part of one's self, belonging and enjoying being part of a group, responsibilities and connections for the benefit of the group, concern for group harmony, or a preference for group work (Oyserman et al., 2002).

Both dimensions have formed the basis for numerous studies identifying and exploiting cultural differences and similarities in, for example, the field of organisational

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management (Hofstede, 1980; Schwartz, 1990; Triandis, 1995). Both of these constructs have also provided a framework for better understanding and appreciation of human functioning in organisations. Among other things, efforts have been made to learn how individualism and collectivism shapes citizenship behaviour (Lee et al., 2023) and attitudes towards unacceptable and unnecessary organisational tasks (Akyurek and Can, 2022), as well as organisational commitment (Abraham, 1997), knowledge sharing (Yu, 2014), or how it affects the creation of new ideas and their implementation (Xiang, 2012). In addition, there have been efforts to recognise how individualism and collectivism shape an organisation's conflict management style (Komarraju et al. 2008) or consumer responses to branding and advertising (Rahman and Luomala, 2021). Important studies have also been those that have sought to explore the relationship between individualism and collectivism, for example with the Big Five characteristics (Triandis, 1995), or with Schwartz's values (Czerniawska, 2018).

In most of the above-mentioned studies, these two constructs-individualism and collectivism-were treated as independent variables shaping, influencing or conditioning certain organisational behaviours. Hence, the aim of the present research is to identify differences in the levels of individualism and equalitarian and hierarchical collectivism depending on the type of organisation and the organisational role played. Both of these constructs were treated as dependent variables in this research.

The main questions posed by the study were: are there differences between team managers and team members in equalitarianism and hierarchical collectivism depending on the type of organisation (public vs. private)?

2. Vertical and horizontal individualism and collectivism

Individualism and its opposite collectivism are terms describing social phenomena that are different conceptions of how to perceive and function in the world. They are expressed in terms of the individual's relationship to the group and the obligations that arise from participation in the group and in forming relationships with group representatives. Both dimensions have formed the basis for numerous studies identifying and exploiting cultural differences and similarities in, for example, the field of organisational management (Hofstede, 1980; Schwartz, 1990; Triandis, 1995).

There are many scales to measure collectivism and individualism and what draws attention when reviewing them is the imprecision of the two concepts

(Wong et al., 2018) and the internal contradiction that occurs (Fiske, 2002; Oyserman et al., 2002; Taras et al., 2014).

The main element in the scales of individualism is the valuing of personal freedom, while in the scales of collectivism it is the sense of obligation, duty and self-sacrifice towards the self-group. For individualism, the focus is characteristically on the individual, who is perceived as separate and unique, whereas for collectivism, the social group and its well-being will be important, and individuals are perceived as interrelated and subordinate to the well-being and functioning of groups (Hofstede, 2000).

In order to explore the detailed differences, it is worth referring to the criteria that characterise the two orientations. The first is the way in which the individual defines the self as interdependent and independent (Triandis, 1989; Markus and Kitayama, 1991). The independent self is typical of representatives of individualistic cultures and means defining oneself by what distinguishes one from others: traits, abilities, experiences, emotions. The main task of a person with an independent self is to express his or her own unique Self, to achieve his or her goals and maximise his or her own interests, and the successful accomplishment of these tasks is the basis for positive self-esteem and a sense of happiness. The interdependent self is typical of collectivist cultures and means defining oneself through the group and other people. A person with an interdependent self is concerned with a sense of belonging. The goal of such a person is to pursue the interests of the group, to fit in with others and to maintain harmonious social relationships.

The social functioning of people with an independent and interdependent self is therefore different. An individualistic understanding of the world is to see and think of oneself as an independent individual interacting with others, but remaining independent, responsible for oneself and making one's own choices. Personal goals take precedence over group goals and personal attitudes over group norms (Triandis, 2001). The main value for an individualistically oriented person is personal freedom, the ability to make decisions, a sense of control and self actualisation (Wagner, 1995).

A feature of the collectivist conception of the world is the perception of oneself as a member of a whole, a sense of connection to the group and a willingness to submit to it. The community gives the individual a sense of security and belonging, and is also a source of moral values for the individual, so the individual feels obliged to act for the group and make sacrifices for it (Markus and Kitayama, 1991). The reward is social approval and support. The individualistic approach is linked to the principle that each person is responsible for himself or herself,

while the collectivistic approach adopts the principle of shared responsibility (Reykowski, 1992). According to some researchers, both orientations are rooted in cultural attitudes and are defined as a cognitive schema (Arieli and Sagiv, 2018).

Consequently, all individuals are capable of individualistic and collectivistic attitudes although to varying degrees. This depends on the cultural cues evident in a particular situation, e.g. the prominence of individualistic norms in an organisation triggers this way of perceiving and interpreting reality.

In this way, the cultural orientation adopted in a particular place and time influences the individual's behaviour (Oyserman and Lee, 2008). Thus, individualistic and collectivistic orientations coexist in everyone's mind and imply a certain tendency to perceive, value, feel and react to social reality.

Another criterion characterising the two dimensions is the type of relationship maintained with people (Adamska et al., 2005). In the case of an individualist orientation, it is an exchange relationship; in collectivism, it is a communal one. In communal relationships, people feel obliged to care about someone else's well-being, respond to the needs of others, and receive certain benefits in return. Receiving benefits, however, does not trigger an obligation to return or repay in the near future. This is different in exchange relationships, where participants giving something expect a reciprocation of comparable value, and when they receive something, they feel obliged to return the same. Thus, exchange norms indicate the need to reciprocate and community norms emphasise consideration of the needs of others.

Relationships are also linked to the maintenance of certain interpersonal relations - equal or hierarchical. According to some researchers, the hierarchical and equalitarian nature of relationships indicates a certain kind of individualism and collectivism (Hwang et al., 2003).

Social structures that force greater opportunity for some to act at the expense of others are referred to as hierarchical. Egalitarian structures, on the other hand, assume that there is equality of persons in relation to rights and duties. Acceptance of either of these two social orders is at the same time a belief in the legitimacy of equal or hierarchical relations. The concept of equal and hierarchical relations also appears in one of Hofstede's cultural dimensions, as power distance, which implies the existence of an emotional space between superior and subordinate. A larger space corresponds to a hierarchical relationship, a smaller space to a more equal relationship. The nature of the relationship - either equalitarian or hierarchical - also manifests itself in other relationships, for example between parent and child, teacher and student,

citizen and authority, and is expressed in either the need for subordination or the need for equality (Hofstede, 2000).

Equalitarian individualism is characterised by people focused on pursuing their own interests and demonstrating the need to be exceptional, but not by achieving high status, but by pursuing their own goals by rejecting the constraints imposed on them by the group. Individuals with high equality individualism perceive themselves as separate from, but equal to, others in terms of status. Such individuals respect the rights of all individuals, and take a negative view of displays of status and success. Values for such individuals include entrepreneurship, modesty, helping the vulnerable, self-reliance, and the ability to direct oneself (Hwang et al., 2003).

Individuals who can be attributed to high hierarchical individualism fulfil their need for uniqueness through rivalry and competition with others. Such individuals strive to be the best, unique and successful. They particularly value power. The core value is entrepreneurship, having influence, ambition and the belief that achieving goals gives a sense of happiness.

Equalitarian collectivism refers to people who perceive themselves as similar to others. They attach particular importance to common goals and interdependence, but find it difficult to conform to authority. People with high equality collectivism focus on good relationships and interdependence with others, but on equality principles. Valued values are cooperation, mutual help, individual social responsibility, honesty, directness, following social norms (Hwang et al., 2003).

In contrast, people with high hierarchical collectivism are focused on submitting to authority and reinforcing their own group status and cohesion. They are also characterised by conscientiousness, obedience and a focus on intergroup competition. They accept an established hierarchy and prefer a differential reward system.

Research on individualism and collectivism has shown that the differences are not only in the realm of worldview, but also in cognitive mechanisms and behavioural aspects. The first cognitive consequence is the preference for certain values. For those with an independent self, life success, ambition, ability and power are important, whereas for those with an interdependent self, helpfulness, honesty, responsibility are important.

Secondly, for the independent self, psychological wellbeing is associated with personal happiness, self-fulfilment, success, while for the interdependent self it is about fulfilling commitments, feeling proud of the achievements of other members of the self group.

Thirdly, the independent self is linked to agency and individualism, while the interdependent self is linked to community and collectivism.

Fourthly, the way information is processed is changing. The independent self is associated with more analytical information processing, whereas the interdependent self is associated with more holistic and context-sensitive processing (Nisbett, 2015).

The behavioural consequences of the activation of the independent and interdependent self include a lower or higher tendency to cooperate in solving social dilemmas, as well as a lower or higher tendency to attach importance to the benefits that a partner may gain from interacting with us (Utz, 2004).

3. Research assumptions

It is known from the social psychology literature that position in the organisational hierarchy correlates with feelings of agency and community (Smith, 2008). Those with power are more causal and those lower in the hierarchy are more communal. Causality is linked to individualism, autonomy, competition and focus on results (Robert and Wasti, 2002). The difference that exists triggers two behavioural systems, the 'striving system' and the 'inhibition system', which are activated depending on the position occupied in the relationship and organisational structure (Keltner et al., 2003). Individuals in managerial positions activate the 'striving for' system, which results in a greater goal orientation, greater motivation to act and a focus on results, while individuals at lower organisational levels activate the 'inhibition' system, which increases sensitivity to threats, as well as a tendency towards social inhibition and controlled information processing (Keltner et al., 2003). Having power also increases the propensity to act and motivation to achieve goals (Chen et al., 2001).

Hence, it has been hypothesised that there are differences in levels of individualism and collectivism (both equal and hierarchical) between leaders and team members regardless of the type of organisation.

Team leaders (executives) would be characterised by higher levels of hierarchical and equalitarian individualism due to a greater sense of agency and autonomy, while team members (subordinate positions) would show higher levels of collectivism due to a greater focus on community and collaboration.

The second hypothesis concerned the existing differences in levels of collectivism and individualism of equality and hierarchy between public and private organisations. This hypothesis was based on two major findings from the literature. First, the literature on the management of public and private

organisations (Vezeteu and Verboncu, 2020; Kim, 2009, 2011; Kettl, 2006) notes important differences in the realised goals and values of the two types of organisations. Public organisations, by definition working for the social good (Nutt and Backoff, 1993), are more committed to pro-social goals. Values such as equality, cooperation and the pursuit of the common good are central in public organisations, and this translates into governance.

In contrast, private organisations, whose main objective is to maximise profits and efficiency, may promote a more individualistic approach to management.

The assumption is that public organisations, due to the pro-social goals and values of these institutions, will exhibit a higher level of collectivism than private organisations.

Secondly, it is known that there are differences between public and private organisations in terms of individualism, collectivism, or power distance (Wolniak, 2008). In private companies, inter-employee relations within all levels of the organisational hierarchy are most important. It is major that an atmosphere of partnership and willingness to help prevails. Some business firms even declare as a value that there is no unhealthy rivalry. In addition, attention is paid to ensuring that those working in the lowest positions are treated with respect. In management-employee relations, a low power distance is characteristic, superiors interact frequently and willingly with their subordinates and are collegial and willing to help.

In public administration organisations, on the other hand, the power distance is high. It manifests itself in high centralisation, hierarchically elaborate organisational structures, large pay differentials between managers and employees. The employee-supervisor relationship is characterised by the inaccessibility of the supervisor and an authoritarian leadership style (Mead and Andrews, 2011). With the above in mind, it was hypothesised that public organisations would exhibit higher levels of hierarchical collectivism than private organisations.

4. Method

4.1. Selection of respondents

The study was concerned with identifying differences in levels of individualism and equality collectivism and hierarchical collectivism according to the type of organisation and the organisational role played. Hence, the sampling criteria were deliberately designed to identify existing differences.

Participants were selected using a snowball approach, in which initial participants recommended others who met the study criteria. This approach was chosen in order to reach a group that was diverse primarily in terms of their organisational role and type of organisation. Participants were divided into four groups: team leaders in public and private organisations and team members in public and private organisations. Team leaders refer to individuals who hold a formal leadership position, overseeing the work of the team and making strategic decisions. Team members refer to individuals who were part of a team but did not hold a formal leadership position and focused on performing tasks, contributing to the team's goals.

In order to determine whether the participant was a team leader or a team member in a public or private organisation, respondents were asked to identify their current role in the organisation and to identify the type of organisation in which they work. In a screening question in the survey, participants were explicitly asked to indicate whether they were a team leader or team member, and whether they worked in a public or private organisation.

The survey conditions also included ensuring that all participants were currently employed and had at least one year of work experience. This was to ensure that respondents had sufficient exposure to organisational environments and roles to provide adequate insight into the research questions.

Additionally, participants were asked to specify their gender, age, number of years in their current positions. As a result, a total of 810 people took part in the survey (82,5% were female, 16,4% were male and 1,1% did not specify gender). The sample included 161 team leaders (27 from public organisations and 134 from private organisations) and 649 team members (172 from the public sector and 477 from the private sector). The mean age of the participants was 28 years (SD = 9,1 years) and the mean length of service was 6,13 years (SD = 7,18 years), with a minimum of 1 and a maximum of 35 years.

4.2. Tools

The Polish KIRH questionnaire, constructed on the basis of Singelis and Triandis' (1995) concept, was used to measure equalitarian and hierarchical individualism and collectivism. The tool is characterised by appropriate psychometric parameters, not differing from the American prototype. Measures of reliability and validity meet basic methodological requirements. According to the tool's authors, reliability analysis showed high internal consistency of the subscales (Cronbach's α for the hierarchical collectivism subscale was $\alpha = 0,73$, for

the hierarchical individualism subscale $\alpha = 0,78$, for the equality individualism subscale $\alpha = 0,71$, for the equality collectivism subscale $\alpha = 0,72$) (Adamska et al., 2005).

Each survey participant was asked to indicate how far each opinion was true for the person surveyed on a scale of 1 (*definitely no*) to 7 (*definitely yes*). An example item for the equality individualism scale is: “*One needs to live one’s life independently of others*”, for equality collectivism “*I like to share small things with my neighbours*”, for hierarchical individualism “*It is important for me to do my job better than others*” and for hierarchical collectivism “*It is important for me to maintain harmony in my group*”.

The overall scale score was the mean of the specified items. Cronbach’s alpha in the present study for the equality individualism subscale was $\alpha = 0,76$, for the equality collectivism subscale $\alpha = 0,69$, for the hierarchical collectivism subscale $\alpha = 0,76$ and for the hierarchical individualism subscale $\alpha = 0,79$.

The survey was conducted in May-July 2023 in Polish private and public organisations. Questionnaires were prepared in Qualtrics and distributed online. Information about the survey was disseminated via social media.

5. Results

A two-factor analysis of variance was used to determine differences in levels of hierarchical and equality individualism and collectivism according to organisation type and organisational role in the research plan organisation type (public vs private) x organisational role (manager vs employee).

5.1. Organisation type and organisational role versus equality individualism

The analysis showed no significant differences in the level of equality individualism according to the type of organisation ($F(1; 806) = 1,544; p = 0,214$). This means that there was no statistically significant difference in the level of equality individualism between public and private organisations.

The results showed no significant difference in the level of equality individualism associated with the role in the organisation ($F(1; 806) = 0,006; p = 0,94$). This means that no statistically significant difference in the level of equality individualism was revealed between those in the leadership role and the team member role.

In addition, no significant interaction effect was observed between organisation type and organisational role on the level of equality individualism

($F(1; 806) = 0,160; p = 0,689$). This means that the factors examined (organisation type and organisational role) do not significantly shape differences in the level of equality individualism in an interdependent manner.

In summary, the results suggest that the level of equality individualism does not vary according to the type of organisation and organisational role in this research sample.

5.2. Organisation type and organisational role versus equality collectivism

The analysis conducted showed that there are significant differences in the level of equality collectivism by organisational role ($F(1; 806) = 17,67; p < .001$). This means that the level of equality collectivism differs significantly between managers and employees. The mean level of equality collectivism is higher among managers ($M=51,16; SD=6,48$) than among employees ($M=48,38; SD=6,43$).

The analysis showed no significant differences in the level of equality collectivism due to the different types of organisations ($F(1; 806) = 0,501; p = 0,479$). This means that no statistically significant differences in the level of equality collectivism were found between public and private organisations.

In addition, no significant interaction effect was observed between organisation type and organisational role on the level of equality collectivism ($F(1; 806) = 0,439; p = 0,508$). This means that the level of equality collectivism does not differ according to organisation type and organisational role.

The results indicate that differences in the level of equality collectivism occur according to the organisational role rather than the type of organisation.

5.3. Organisation type and organisational role versus hierarchical collectivism

The level of hierarchical collectivism differs significantly between organisation types ($F(1; 806) = 12,075; p < .001$). Higher levels of hierarchical collectivism are found in public organisations ($M=34,61; SD=7,45$) than in private organisations ($M=33,02; SD=7,02$).

There are significant differences in the level of hierarchical collectivism between organisational roles ($F(1; 806) = 8,063; p = 0,005; \eta^2=0,01$). Hierarchical collectivism is higher among managers ($M=34,31; SD=7,37$) than among employees ($M=32,87; SD=7,02$).

A significant interaction effect was observed between organisation type and organisational role on shaping differences in the level of hierarchical collectivism ($F(1; 806) = 3,984; p = 0,046$). This means that the type of organisation significantly shapes differences in the level of hierarchical collectivism according to the organisational role.

Simple effect - type of organisation

Differences in the level of hierarchical collectivism between public and private organisations are mainly found in the group of team leaders ($F(1; 159) = 8,59; p = 0,004$). Hierarchical collectivism is significantly higher in the group of team leaders in public organisations ($M=38; SD=7,94$) than in the group of team leaders in business organisations ($M=33,56; SD=7,04$).

The level of hierarchical collectivism among employees of public and business organisations is not significantly different ($F(1; 647) = 3,65; p=0,057$).

Simple effect - organisational role

Differences in the level of hierarchical collectivism between those in managerial and employee roles are only significant in public organisations ($F(1; 197) = 6,69; p = 0,01$).

Among team leaders in public organisations, hierarchical collectivism is significantly higher ($M=38,00; SD= 7,94$) than among employees ($M=34,08; SD=7,25$).

There is no significant difference in the level of hierarchical collectivism between those in managerial and employee roles in business organisations ($F(1; 609) = 0,1; p=0,318$).

The results indicate that there are differences in the level of hierarchical collectivism by both organisation type, organisational role and the interaction between these variables. In public organisations, higher levels of hierarchical collectivism are observed among those in team leadership roles.

5.4. Organisation type and organisational role versus hierarchical individualism

The results of the statistical analysis indicate that there were no significant differences in the level of hierarchical individualism due to the factors examined. There were no significant differences in the level of hierarchical individualism between different types of organisations ($F(1; 806) = 0,63; p = 0,43$). This means

that the level of hierarchical individualism is not significantly different between public and private organisations.

The results showed no significant differences in the level of hierarchical individualism according to the role in the organisation ($F(1; 806) = 0,002; p = 0,97$). This means that the level of hierarchical individualism did not differ significantly between those in leadership and team member roles.

In addition, no significant interaction effect was observed between organisation type and organisational role on the level of hierarchical individualism ($F(1; 806) = 0,501; p = 0,479$). This means that the level of hierarchical individualism does not differ according to organisation type and organisational role.

6. Discussion

The aim of the study conducted was to identify differences in equalitarian and hierarchical individualism and collectivism according to the organisational role and type of organisation (public and private organisations). Two hypotheses were posed. The first was that there were differences in levels of equalitarian and hierarchical individualism and collectivism between leaders and team members. It was hypothesised that leaders would show higher levels of equalitarian and hierarchical individualism than team members. As a result of the study, a significant difference was observed in the level of equality collectivism between the group of leaders and team members. Team leaders showed significantly higher levels of equality collectivism than team members regardless of the type of organisation in which they worked.

A high level of equality collectivism means that a person perceives a high degree of similarity between him/herself and others, attaches particular importance to common goals and interdependence. Valued values are cooperation and mutual help, the individual's social responsibility, honesty, directness, acting in accordance with the rules of social coexistence. Individuals with higher levels of equality collectivism place greater value on equality, group togetherness, sociability and interdependence (Rahman and Luomala, 2021).

Higher levels of equality collectivism among team leaders can be considered at two levels. The first is to relate the outcome to the relationship between managers, which can be explained by the need to collaborate and coordinate during task completion. It is not uncommon for organisational goals to be realised through processes involving several departments/teams, hence good relationships between managers are essential to increase the efficiency of operations. The second level is high equality collectivism in the relationship

between the manager and the team of employees. At this point, reference can be made to studies confirming the results obtained, for example, the results from the research of Ł. Sułkowski (2002), indicating communitarianism in Polish management with elements of moderate individualism, or to studies showing collectivism in management (Rakowska and Sitko-Lutek, 2000).

It was also observed that the level of hierarchical collectivism is significantly higher among team leaders but only in public organisations than among team members. Thus, in the case of hierarchical collectivism, in addition to the organisational role played, the type of organisation also mattered.

Significantly higher levels of hierarchical collectivism are associated with submissiveness, willingness to submit to authority, prioritisation of group and group goals, and acceptance of inequality (Rahman and Luomala, 2021). Hierarchical collectivism also implies a strong attachment to a group or organisation, where hierarchy is recognised and respected and loyalty to superiors is high. The result of higher hierarchical collectivism can be linked to high power distance in public organisations. It manifests itself in high centralisation, hierarchically elaborate organisational structures, high differentiation in remuneration between managers and employees. Employee-supervisor relationships are characterised by the inaccessibility of the supervisor and an authoritarian leadership style (Mead and Andrews, 2011).

It can be said that public organisations often operate within a specific cultural context, where social norms emphasise greater importance for hierarchy and the role of power structures, which perhaps contributes to higher levels of hierarchical collectivism among team leaders. In public organisations, the hierarchical management structure is often more visible and noticeable than in the private sector (Mead and Andrews, 2011).

The results obtained in this study do not confirm that there is a difference in the level of equalitarian and hierarchical individualism depending on the type of organisation and the organisational role. Thus, the results obtained differ from reports from other studies that associate individualism with agency and rivalry attributed to leaders (Robert and Wasti, 2002; Smith, 2008). The observed phenomenon can be explained by referring to the research of Chen, Lee Chai and Bargh (2001). According to the researchers, it is the motivation to exercise power that plays a major role in the behaviour of team leaders. Having power can lead to the activation of both pro-social and selfish goals. Managers with pro-social motivation, who emphasise the common good, show higher levels of equality collectivism, meaning that

they strive for an even distribution of responsibility, promote cooperation and concern for the welfare of the team. In contrast, those focused on selfish goals, seeking to consolidate their position in the hierarchy, tend to have higher levels of hierarchical individualism - they are more focused on their own interests, competition and controlling the team.

According to some researchers, individualism and collectivism are rooted in cultural attitudes and are defined as a cognitive schema (Arieli and Sagiv, 2018), hence these dimensions are not dependent on the organisational role played. Consequently, all individuals are capable of individualistic and collectivistic attitudes although to varying degrees. This depends on the cultural cues visible in a specific situation, e.g. the prominence of individualistic norms in an organisation triggers this way of perceiving and interpreting reality. In this way, the cultural orientation adopted in a particular place and time influences an individual's behaviour (Oyserman and Lee, 2008).

While the work environment may shape these characteristics through its cultural norms and values, individualism may nevertheless be related to an individual's personality traits, making the relationship between the type of organisation and the level of individualism less direct. This is supported by results from a study that showed a significant correlation between individualism and extraversion (Triandis, 1995). The second issue may be related to the variability of organisational culture, being influenced by various factors such as changing management trends, employee turnover, team diversity, etc. therefore, the relationship between organisational type and individualism level may be more difficult to capture.

Individualism may also manifest itself in various aspects of an individual's life that are not necessarily closely related to their work. While organisational culture may shape certain work behaviours, individualism as a trait may manifest itself outside the work sphere, for example, and in this situation it may also be difficult to grasp the relationship between type of organisation and level of individualism (Triandis, 1995). In general, individualism is often based on an individual's personality traits and may have a variety of sources, making the link between organisation type and organisational role on this trait less clear.

The second hypothesis was that there would be differences in levels of individualism and equal and hierarchical collectivism between public and private organisations. It was hypothesised that public organisations would show higher levels of hierarchical collectivism than private organisations.

The results obtained confirmed the hypothesis. Public organisations have significantly higher levels of hierarchical collectivism than private organisations. The study showed no significant differences between organisations in terms of equalitarian and hierarchical individualism and equalitarian collectivism.

The results obtained correspond with previous reports in the literature on differences between organisations in adopted values and goals (Vezeteu and Verboncu, 2020; Kim, 2009, 2011; Kettl, 2006) Higher levels of collectivism in public organisations are associated with these organisations acting for the social good (Nutt and Backoff, 1993) and engaging in pro-social goals. On the other hand, a higher score of hierarchical collectivism in public organisations alludes to research related to high levels of power distance, which manifests itself in highly centralised, hierarchically elaborate organisational structures (Wolniak, 2008).

It is worth asking what the research shows. Well, higher levels of hierarchical and equality collectivism among managers, indicate a strong focus on the needs of others and dedication to the good of the group or community. Common to these dimensions are sharing with others, being willing to help others, feeling satisfaction at the success of others, striving for a fair distribution of tasks, favouring harmony over conflict, placing importance on the general good, building good relationships with others, and putting others' needs before their own. These characteristics portray managers and public organisations as those entities that focus on collective goals, social relationships and commitment to the good of the group and community, often sacrificing their own needs for the benefit of others. This is a different character of relationship proposed by managers than is presented in their research by Czerska and Rutka (2014). According to these researchers, from 1997 to 2013, managers' attitudes towards leading teams were changing from democratic to autocratic. Thus, we may be dealing with a cultural change in the area of people leadership that alludes to greater togetherness and caring for each other. This change may shape other organisational behaviours, as people with higher levels of collectivism are more willing to sacrifice personal needs for the good of the group and prefer an inclusive style when resolving conflicts (Komarraju et al. 2008). Peer collectivism is positively related to citizenship behaviour and pride in work and negatively related to actions taken to harm the organisation (Lee et al., 2023). For those with higher levels of equality and hierarchical collectivism, a sense of security, stability, relationships with other people, and attachment to tradition are important (Czerniawska, 2018).

The second point that could be observed is that equality collectivist behaviours are related to the organisational role performed and not to the type of organisation, whereas hierarchical collectivist behaviours are related to both organisational role and organisational culture.

7. Conclusions

The aim of the research carried out was to identify differences in the levels of equality and hierarchical collectivism and individualism depending on the type of organisation and the organisational role played. The manner in which the study was conducted, the criteria for selecting respondents for the study and the research tool used allowed differences to be identified and thus the stated objective to be realised. Both research hypotheses were confirmed. It was shown that there are differences in the level of equality collectivism between leaders and team members regardless of the type of organisation, as well as in the level of hierarchical collectivism between organisations and leaders of public and private organisations. No significant differences in the level of equalitarian and hierarchical individualism were observed in this study according to organisational role and type of organisation. The study makes major contributions to theory in several key areas related to organisational behaviour. Firstly, the study introduces a distinction between equality and hierarchical collectivism and individualism, which is a non-standard approach in the analysis of organisational behaviour. Previous research (e.g. Wolniak, 2008) has tended to focus on the general categories of individualism and collectivism, whereas this study shows that these attitudes can take different forms that depend on both the organisational role and the type of organisation.

Secondly, the study shows the importance of organisational role in the adoption of equality-based collective behaviour. Leaders show higher levels of equality collectivism than organisational members, suggesting that their function requires a greater commitment to interpersonal relationships and the pursuit of group cohesion. The implication is that leaders, even in the private sector, are more likely to act as a team, which counterbalances traditional assumptions about leaders' individualism (e.g. causal, competitive). Third, the study shows that the level of hierarchy-based collectivism is influenced not only by organisational role but also by organisational culture. Public organisations, characterised by greater power distance and hierarchy, have higher levels of hierarchical collectivism among leaders. This suggests

that power structures and hierarchy reinforce attitudes of subordination and acceptance of inequality. This phenomenon extends the understanding of the impact of organisational culture on the attitudes and behaviours of leaders and team members, which may have implications for management practices across sectors.

No significant difference was observed in the level of individualistic equality and hierarchical individualism depending on the organisational role and type of organisation. Perhaps it would be worthwhile to conduct future research in the direction of looking for relationships between the level of individualism with other organisational variables, for example, the size of the organisation, the number of years working in the team/organisation, the level of satisfaction and commitment. It is also worth noting that the results obtained may depend on how the research was conducted. The methodology, the measurement tools used, the research sample and other factors may affect the results and their interpretation. The very fact that the tool did not cover the various factors influencing the behaviour of those in managerial roles may have affected the results. In the future, it would be worthwhile to conduct the research by introducing additional variables, such as age, the main business profile of the organisation, as well as seniority in team leadership. Perhaps these variables will broaden the knowledge of the factors that differentiate the level of individualism, collectivism.

Abstract

The aim of the study presented here is to identify differences in levels of individualism and equality collectivism and hierarchical individualism depending on the type of organisation and the organisational role performed. A total of 810 people took part in the study, representing organisations in the public and private sectors with different organisational roles. Participants answered questions on the scale on individualism and collectivism of equality and hierarchy (KIRH), constructed based on Singelis and Triandis' (1995) concept. The survey was conducted in May 2023 in Polish private and public organisations. A two-factor analysis of variance was used to determine differences in the level of hierarchical and equalitarian individualism and collectivism according to organisation type and organisational role in the research design of organisation type (public vs. private) x organisational role (managerial vs. employee).

The research shows that the level of equality collectivism varies according to organisational role. It is higher among managers than among team members. The level of hierarchical collectivism varies according to the type of organisation and role. It is higher among team leaders in public organisations.

No significant differences were found in the level of equality and hierarchical individualism between public and private organisations, as well as between managers and team members. The study confirms the existence of cultural differences between the public and private sectors and between managers and team members. The study highlights that the individual personality traits of team leaders may be as important in shaping employee behaviour as the type of organisation. The study is a pilot study.

Keywords: *leadership, public organisations, private organisations, vertical and horizontal individualism and collectivism.*

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