

TENDENCY TO RISK AND OPTIMISM AS RELATED TO JOB SATISFACTION IN ENTREPRENEURS IN THE CONTEXT OF A PIVOTAL CAREER CHANGE

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Summary. In the article there has been formulated the concept of career transition and there are contained results of empirical studies regarding determinants of the tendency to introduce changes in the course of one's career, with a special consideration given to personal factors. Next, there have been presented results of the author's own research that were carried out in four groups: persons who did not plan any career changes ($n = 42$), persons who had planned a change but gave it up ($n = 45$), persons who made a pivotal career decision because of positive motives ($n = 49$), and persons who made a career change because of negative reasons ($n = 42$). The career change meant starting an enterprise and becoming an entrepreneur. The research results indicate differences among the enumerated groups regarding job satisfaction, positive and negative mood at work, optimism, and tendency to take risk. Persons who have made a career transition because of positive motives obtain the highest scores on job satisfaction, optimism, and tendency to risk.

Key words: career transition, tendency to risk, optimism, job satisfaction

Introduction

Life-long career course may be characterized by stability and remaining in once adopted professional position or – contrary – it may take a dynamic form, marked with transitions. Complexity of phenomena and challenges at the contemporary labour market often favours making decisions about a thorough change in the area of one's career. The number of permanent places of employment is constantly lowering, which forces employees to be more active, for example to show greater individual enterprise. Such career transitions are encouraged not only by situational factors but also by personality dispositions, developmental changes in the course of life, or the need of a greater job satisfaction. The relevant personality determinants include for instance such personality traits as neuroticism, openness to experiences, adaptive skills, or flexibility.

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Such a sudden, significant professional change may be called the career transition. The current article contains presentation of varied approaches to and ways of defining turns in a career, the author's own concept of this phenomenon, and its personal and situational reasons. There are also presented research outcomes regarding levels of tendency to risk and optimism and job satisfaction among persons who have made the decision about a pivotal career change because of some negative reasons (factors that push someone away from the previous workplace: dismissal, lack of job satisfaction) or some positive ones (factors that draw someone to a new place: need of career development, will to face challenges, making job satisfaction greater). Moreover, there have been analysed relations among varied aspects of job satisfaction (general satisfaction, positive and negative emotions at work) and the tendency to risk and optimism. The pivotal decision of the study participants met the criterion of the risky change (the examinees resigned from their permanent job and started a business activity). The control group comprised persons who had planned a career change but finally they did not realize it and persons who were realizing stable careers, with no plans to make any significant changes.

Pivotal career changes

Transition is 'a sudden, pivotal change in the course of something', 'a border between two periods' (<http://sjp.pwn.pl/>). Career transition means a thorough professional change, closing of a marked phase and starting a new one. Changes in the course of one's career may be intentional, expected, developmental, or not planned before and unexpected, yet they always take the form of turning points (Richardson, 2012). Such transitions are a result of a modification or a total change in one's self-concept in the cognitive and motivational dimensions, and within a whole attitude (Schlossberg, 2011; Bobek, Hanson, Robbins, 2012). As a consequence they influence varied relations and performed roles, they require a change in schemes of functioning and rejection of previous job routine (Hall, Suddarth, 2015). In specialized literature one may find some theoretical analyses and research results that are to a greater or smaller extent related to the discussed phenomenon. In earlier studies there appeared the notion of mid-career crisis, which was considered in the context of the theory by Super and Erikson (Perosa, Perosa, 1984-1985) and the notion of career crises, meant as developmental challenges (Bańka, 2005). In more recent studies significant career changes are referred to as an element of mid-life crisis (Oleś, 2013); a part of the realized career type, for example the Proteus career, which consists in career changes aimed at a more complete realization of a vision of oneself (Hall, 2006; Suchar, 2010; Kasprzak, 2013); a symptom of general mobility (Chudzikowski, 2012; Kronenberg, Carree, 2012), horizontal and vertical mobility (Sorokin, 2009), and job flexibility (Sienkiewicz, 2009).

The middle period of life is related to multidirectional development and variability. People at this age are most often very active and fit. Middle age appears as

a time of balanced growth (Lachman, Teshale, Agrigoroaei, 2015). Successful transitions in this period of life present a significant challenge, yet a favourable move to another environment and tasks may even accelerate one's professional and personal development and exert a long-lasting influence upon both an individual and the surrounding. Career changes lead to some other modifications, for instance in interpersonal relations and in schemes of everyday functioning (Hall, Suddarth, 2015).

Career transition may be also a result of a developmental crisis that occurs in mid-life. Thus, it is sometimes referred to as an equivalent of mid-life crisis (Ibarra, 2003). Redefinitions of values, restructuring of goals and tasks lead to a change in life style. Oleś (2013) links the phenomenon of mid-life with mid-career crisis. The author refers to the outcomes of Dutch studies in a group of men aged 26-55 in which it has been confirmed that work and career are especially important for professionally active persons in their mid-life. Realizing professional goals and striving after successes become more intense at the age between 36 and 45. This period in life is linked with changes in identification with professional roles that are performed and with planning some further ways of career. People at this age have similar levels of job satisfaction and psychological problems as the ones observed in other age groups. However, they display a significantly stronger correlation between work-related worries and intensity of disorders in mental health (Bunk, Jansen, In: Oleś, 2013).

The key condition for a reliable analysis of a selected issue lies in defining it precisely. In case of empirical studies it is also a basis for adequate selection of measurement methods and participants. The major characteristics of the currently discussed phenomenon of career transition consists in the occurrence of a thorough change. However, the very fact of introducing a change is not sufficient to define precisely what the transition is. A significant criterion that distinguishes an ordinary change of a workplace from a pivotal change is probably such a qualitative change of the type of work which results in new tasks and activities and demands different competencies. Career transition is especially distinctive when a person who has functioned in a definite and consistent environment (e.g. a technical one) leaves it to enter a totally different environment (e.g. an artistic one) and takes a set of thoroughly new tasks, activities, and professional values. This may often mean a real change of one's job (Bańka, 2005).

The notion of career transition should not be used when an employee has been functioning at labour market for a few years only. Change of a job at the beginning of one's career may be a symptom of the trial and error method in the professional area or an intentional strategy aimed at maximizing one's professional experience. Transition may be observed when an individual has gained considerable professional achievements that are related to significant life experience (Biegańska, 2014). Super (In: Bańka, 2005), the author of the concept of professional development, stresses that choice of a job is not an act of a one-time decision but a process of progressive changes. According to him, this development consists of a few stages and

job changes up to the age of 30 are of a developmental, not pivotal, character. Only if the turning point in one's professional activity occurs later, it may be referred to as a pivotal one. Therefore, crucial changes in work contents or status that appear only in the phase of stabilization (age: 31-44) and maintaining *status quo* (age: 45-64) may be acknowledged as the pivotal changes (Bańka, 2005).

What helps to distinguish an ordinary job change from a spectacular decision is the frequency of making changes. One should refer to the phenomenon of jumping, i.e. a specific style of functioning at the labour market which is characterized by high variability (a change every several or a dozen or so months). A jumper is a person who starts a new job very often and on his/her own initiative, is satisfied with new challenges, getting new qualifications and skills (<http://praca.hrc.pl>). Thus, jumping cannot be called a transition, which by definition means something rare, extraordinary, a spectacular turning point.

Career transition is also made when an ordinary worker decides to start the role of an entrepreneur. The person may still perform the same professional activities and tasks, yet his/her legal status is changed. The previous employee establishes a company and becomes an economic entity, who takes some new duties related to managing an entrepreneurship.

To sum it up, it ought to be stated that career transition occurs when there is a combination of a few circumstances from the following ones: closing a definite 'era' in one's career, rejecting the stable way of professional functioning, taking tasks that require new skills, knowledge, competencies (a new job), or change of a status (from an employee to an employer or to a self-employed entrepreneur); the change is an exceptional one (it is not jumping); the change occurs during the middle stage of one's professional career (stabilization and maintaining *status quo*).

Personal characteristics and pivotal professional decisions

There is a whole range of reasons that determine both readiness and realization of pivotal changes in a career course. Personal determinants, especially personality traits, are considered in empirical studies most frequently. Heppner, Multon and Johnston (1994, In: Hall, 2006) tried to explain which characteristics favoured, and which of them hindered making career changes. The authors have elaborated the Career Change Inventory, which allows for multidimensional measurement of psychological characteristics that are significant while changing a workplace. There have been distinguished five factors: readiness to take risk, trust to oneself as tasks contractor, the sense of having control over events, awareness of being supported by one's surrounding, and one's own independence in making important decisions. Studies on personal determinants of career changes in mid-life have been conducted recently by the following researchers: Fouad, Bynner (2008), Motulsky (2010), Bimrose, Hearne (2012), Bobek, Hanson, Robbins (2012), Liu, Englar-Carlson, Minichiello (2012), Swanson (2012), Shoffner (2015). The key factors that determine the ability

to make professional and at the same time developmental changes include as follows: realism, self-awareness, the ability to identify one's goal, the sense of meaning of activities, the ability to maintain activity aimed at a goal, flexibility, resistance and resourcefulness, and having social support. Brown and co-workers (2012) carried out interviews with 64 employees in Norway and Great Britain and have proved that a career change is possible due to an individual's adaptive skills that result from both personality traits and educational and competence resources which have been gathered in the course of formal and informal learning. Whereas, Liu, Englar-Carlson and Minichiello (2012) made qualitative studies among male scientists and engineers in the United States. The analysis concerned psychological determinants and consequences of a career change. The researchers have stated that personality is the major factor responsible for change dynamics, yet some importance is attributed to life style, interpersonal relations, and work environment characteristics as well. Among results of such an important decision there is marked psychological stress. While Chudzikowski (2012) having examined 807 persons with a successful and dynamic career claims that turns in its course are a result of individual mobility and they are beneficial for them.

Herr and Cramer (2005) quote some outcomes of the research conducted by Perosa and Perosa in the 80s of the 20th century. The studies concerned psychological states experienced by individuals who were changing their work and also personal characteristics of those persons. The researchers were comparing persons who had planned to change their work but did not do it with those who were just changing or had changed it (the change criterion was a transition to another job according to Holland's typology). The main factor that differentiated persons who were only planning a change from those had introduced it consisted in willingness and ability to take risk. Psychological consequences of a pivotal professional change, after a period of difficulties and experiencing psychological costs, comprised development and satisfaction. Vinson, Connelly and Ones (2007) analysed relations between readiness to career change and personality traits from the Great Five model, they referred to extraversion, openness to experiences, and conscientiousness as the favourable factors (the higher their intensity, the stronger change orientation).

Job satisfaction and pivotal career decisions

The reasons for readiness to make significant professional changes include also some environmental factors. They may either push somebody away from the previous workplace or attract the person to a new one (Herr, Cramer, 2005). They may concern changes in the environment that are independent from an employee, like overburdening somebody with work or giving him/her too little to do, monotony or excessive variability and stimulation in the environment, role conflict, too low salary, no chances for development. The decision about change is often based upon dissatisfaction with varied aspects of the previous job (superiors, colleagues, work

contents) and the need of improving the situation. These phenomena are so common that researchers who study issues within organizational psychology have been analysing them systematically for many decades (Zalewska, 2003).

As early as in the 60s of the 20th century, job satisfaction was divided into two aspects – an emotional one (emotions at work and toward work) and a cognitive one (assessment of one's work and professional situation) (Brief, 1998; Organ, Near, 1985, In: Zalewska, 2003). Cognitive and emotional aspects of an attitude needn't be in accordance with one another, they may evoke different consequences. They are developing in the course of different processes and are dependent on varied factors. According to Brief, job satisfaction is an attitude expressed in affective reactions and cognitive judgements that reflect a level to which the performed job is favourable or unfavourable for the person. The cognitive aspect is called job satisfaction, and the emotional one – emotional assessment of work, mental state or mood at a workplace (Brief, 1998; Zalewska, 1999, 2001a, 2001b). Measurement of the emotional aspect is made by means of assessment of one's mental state at work, using the dimension: satisfaction – dissatisfaction. A more accurate way is provided by examining positive and negative affect. This distinction is justified as presence of positive emotions does not exclude occurrence of the negative ones. Moreover, both the affective states influence behaviours of workers in an organization in different ways (Zalewska, 2002). In order to measure the positive and negative affects, Brief and co-workers (1988) constructed the Job Affect Scale (JAS). The scale was adapted to Polish conditions by Zalewska (2002) and it is used in numerous studies within organizational psychology. In the studies that are presented in the current article measurement of the cognitive aspect of job satisfaction was made using the Job Satisfaction Scale (SSP), also constructed by Zalewska (2003).

In the 80s there appeared a position in which a relation between personality and job satisfaction was highlighted. A special importance was attributed to neuroticism and extraversion, the sense of control, optimism, job commitment, and appreciating social values. In longitudinal studies, a relatively stable level of job satisfaction was observed despite functioning in varied environments. It was calculated that genetic determinants presented an explanation for about 30% of variance of job satisfaction (Zalewska, 2003).

Tendency to risk and optimism as related to changes in the course of one's career

Tendency to risk and optimism influence numerous aspects of an individual's life and start a number of behaviours that are related to realization of important life goals. This includes having a job that fully fits one's competencies and aspirations.

Risk is a state of threat, probability of a loss, a state of uncertainty, and also a characteristics of behaviours that are directly self-destructive (Studenski, 2004).

Risk may be interpreted in motivational categories. In this case, it becomes an instrument that allows for realization of a goal or avoidance of a loss (instrumental risk). Risky behaviours may be also aimed at experiencing positive emotions (stimulating risk) (Strelau, 2002; Zaleśkiewicz, Piskorz, 2011). Researchers who study individual differences agree that a significant role in taking risky behaviours is played by the features of temperament that are related to the mechanism of stimulation regulation. A special importance is attributed to the level of activity (in men and women) and resilience (in men) (Stawiarska-Lietzau, 2006). Highly-reactive persons choose behaviours and situations with low stimulating value, so potentially not very risky. An opposite phenomenon concerns persons with low reactivity, who feel comfortable in conditions with high stimulation and risk (Strelau, 2002). Individual differences cause that what presents an instrumental risk for one person, may be a stimulating risk for another one.

Preferences regarding assessment and acceptance of risk are a significant criterion in selection of workers for posts where accurate behaviours in difficult situations are required (Stawiarska-Lietzau, 2013). Persons who like risk are characterized by a strong need of stimulation, activity, resilience, high impulsivity, independence in thinking and acting, a strong need of autonomy, acting in a short time perspective, tolerance for mistakes. Having these traits makes people turn out to be good at realizing tasks in which examining new ideas, making experiments, taking rivalry, and acting under uncertainty and time pressure, are demanded (Zaleśkiewicz, 1998). Risk is present when there appear one's own cognitive limitations, such as lack of knowledge of rules, inability to predict the course of events because of complexities of a situation or a possibility of sudden changes that are difficult to predict and to control. These criteria are often met in business situations. A definite lack of tolerance for risk in entrepreneurs may result in some losses in mental health and dissatisfaction with work. Whereas, tendency to moderate risk leads to readiness to take activities with an unknown or uncertain result and related to a possibility of danger, loss, or damage.

Optimism is another personal resource included in the studies to be presented later. It is a generalized expectation of positive events in the future; it is stable in time and independent from context (Scheier, Carver, 1985; Czerw, Borkowska, 2010). Optimists – contrary to pessimists – expect that things will turn out according to their plans, they expect rather good than bad events, they have a more positive image of themselves and their own position. Optimism results in putting a greater effort to realize one's aim and it leads to positive effects at the behavioural level. An individual who expects a successful culmination of his/her activities presents the tendency to more intensive attempts. The opposite tendency occurs when one expects a failure, in this case the person's effort is reduced. There are also differences in the perception of obstacles – optimists minimize them in their assessments.

Łaguna (2010) quotes results of a number of studies on the relation between optimism and making the decision to start one's own entrepreneurship. It is stressed

that optimism is perceived as an important variable in resourcefulness analysis, though results of the relevant studies are not always unambiguous (Cooper, Dunkelberg, Woo, 1988, In: Łaguna, 2010). Shook, Priem, McGee (2003) proved a positive role of optimism in realization of a business enterprise, and Markman, Baron (2003) pointed to differences in the intensity of optimism between entrepreneurs and persons who preferred to stay in the role of employees. Owners of newly founded companies are particularly often characterized by high optimism and they have the tendency to overestimate their chances for achieving success (Zaleśkiewicz, Piskorz, 2011).

The analyses and data presented above render it possible to expect that tendency to risk and optimism distinguish persons who introduce pivotal changes with determination and courage from those who would like some improvement in the professional sphere but they do not believe in success of such an enterprise or focus their attention at doubts, obstacles and possible high costs of the revolutionary changes. Persons who have never planned such changes may either feel very high job satisfaction or have low aspirations in this area, independently from a level of satisfaction they experience. Therefore, lack of radical career decisions needn't result from a lower level of tendency to risk or optimism. A significant question is whether these traits differentiate between persons who make a career transition due to negative motivation (there have occurred some factors which push an individual away from the previous workplace) and those who act this way because of positive motivation (there exist factors that attract an individual to a new workplace).

The author's study

The study was conducted in four groups of persons who differed as for their status regarding career transition. The first group comprised employees who had been working in the same company and at the same or similar post for ten years and who did not plan or initiate any significant career changes ($N = 42$, 28 women, 14 men, mean age 38.5). The second group included persons who had planned a significant career change in recent years but finally they did not do it ($N = 45$, 25 women, 20 men, mean age 39). The third group consisted of persons who had made a career transition because of a positive motive, e.g. the need of personal development, fulfilling one's aspirations, or facing a challenge. In their case there were acting factors that attracted them to a new job ($N = 49$, 23 women, 26 men, mean age 40.2). In the fourth group there were persons who had made a career transition because of a negative motive, e.g. the need of solving some difficult problems, escaping from unaccepted conditions at the previous workplace. In their case there occurred factors that pushed them away from the previous job ($N = 42$, 25 women, 17 men, mean age 39.8).

The participants' decisions were referred to as the pivotal ones if they occurred in their mid-life and were not one of many job changes (the turning point appeared

after a relatively long period of working at one place). It ought to be highlighted that persons with both positive and negative motivations to change undertook their privately owned enterprises after having given up their up to date work and thus they became entrepreneurs. Altogether there were examined 178 persons, including 101 women and 77 men. All the participants were similar in education and age.

The study was aimed at finding answers to the following questions:

1. Do the examined groups differ in dispositional optimism and tendency to risk?
2. Are levels of job satisfaction and intensities of positive and negative affect at work different for persons who realize a stable career and those whose career is marked with a significant turn?
3. May tendency to risk and dispositional optimism be acknowledged as determinants of cognitive and emotional aspects of job satisfaction in persons who have made a significant change in the course of their own career?

In order to answer these questions, the following examination tools were used: the Risky Behaviours Test by Studenski (Studenski, 2004) to examine individual tendency to risk, the Life Orientation Test LOT-R to examine dispositional optimism (Juczyński, 2009), the Job Satisfaction Scale SSP (Zalewska, 2003), the Job Affect Scale JAS by Brief, Burke, Robinson, and Webster, in the Polish adaptation by Zalewska (2001a), to measure positive and negative affect experienced at work. The enumerated tools are commonly known and applied in psychology. They have high parameters of validity and reliability. Additionally, there was used the author's own survey with questions regarding the course of the participants' career.

Results

The results distribution was similar to the normal one. At different stages of the examination work there were made the analysis of variance, the NIR test, and the analysis of multiple regression. In table 1, there are presented results of the analysis of variance aimed at examining whether there are differences among the examined groups regarding tendency to risk and optimism. The differences turned out statistically significant.

The highest tendency to risk was observed in the group of persons who had made the decision about a change and started their own enterprise because of developmental motives ($M = 35.03$). Persons whose behaviour was directed by negative motives (there occurred some factors that were pushing them away from the previous workplace) ($M = 26.33$) and those who never planned a change ($M = 21.3$) scored significantly lower on the analysed variable. The lowest tendency to risk was characteristic for persons who planned a career change but finally gave it up ($M = 18.03$). The differences enumerated above are statistically significant ($F = 6.28$; $p = 0.001$).

Similar differences among the groups are observed with regard to optimism. The highest levels of optimism are characteristic of persons who make career

changes because of positive ($M = 20.01$) and negative ($M = 19.08$) reasons. A significantly lower optimism ($F = 5.05$; $p = 0.002$) is displayed by employees who stay at their up to date workplace despite an earlier planned change ($M = 14.08$) and those who do not plan any changes ($M = 16.32$).

Taking into account the tendency to risk and optimism one may divide all the examinees into two groups. The first one consists of persons who have made a pivotal change in their career, and the second group includes those who continue their previous path. The former accept risk to a greater extent and present higher optimism. It is characteristic that persons who had given up their previous plans obtained the lowest scores on the analysed variables. It is possible to propose cautiously the thesis that lower acceptance of risk and preference for predictable situations, together with a less optimistic attitude toward the future, present a barrier on the road to introducing significant changes in the course of one's career. The obtained results refer to the research outcomes that were presented in the introductory part of the current article (Czerw, Borkowska, 2010; Zaleśkiewicz, Piskorz, 2011; Stawiarska-Lietzau, 2013).

Table 1. Differences among the examined groups regarding tendency to risk and optimism

Personal characteristics	A person's status regarding a pivotal career change	<i>M</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	Significance of differences among groups
Tendency to risk	Did not plan a change (1)	21.30	6.28	0.001	1-2, 1-3, 2-3, 3-4, 1-4, 1-4
	Planned a change – did not realize it (2)	18.03			
	Made a change – attracting factors (3)	35.03			
	Made a change – repulsive factors (4)	26.33			
Optimism	Did not plan a change (1)	16.32	5.05	0.002	1-2, 1-3, 1-4, 2-3, 2-4
	Planned a change – did not realize it (2)	14.08			
	Made a change – attracting factors (3)	20.01			
	Made a change – repulsive factors (4)	19.08			

Group labels in the table: (1) – persons who did not plan a change in their career $N = 42$; (2) – persons who planned a significant change, but finally they did not realize it $N = 45$; (3) – persons who made a career change because of factors that attracted them to a new workplace $N = 49$; (4) – persons who made a career change because of factors that pushed them away from the previous workplace $N = 42$.

Job satisfaction and affect at work as related to pivotal career changes

In table 2, there are presented results of the analysis of variance aimed at observing differences in cognitive and emotional components of job satisfaction in persons who realize a stable career and those who have made a transition in their career and started the risky role of an entrepreneur because of positive (developmental) reasons or the negative ones (which were pushing them away from the previous workplace).

Table 2. Differences among the examined groups regarding job satisfaction and affect at work

Variables	A person's status regarding a pivotal career change	<i>M</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	Significance of differences among groups
Job satisfaction	Did not plan a change (1)	20.04			
	Planned a change – did not realize it (2)	17.67			
	Made a change – attracting factors (3)	29.09	7.84	0.001	1-2, 1-3, 1-4, 2-3, 2-4, 3-4
	Made a change – repulsive factors (4)	25.66			
Positive affect	Did not plan a change (1)	40.24			
	Planned a change – did not realize it (2)	35.21			
	Made a change – attracting factors (3)	48.80	12.34	0.000	1-2, 1-3, 1-4, 2-3, 2-4, 3-4
	Made a change – repulsive factors (4)	44.30			
Negative affect	Did not plan a change (1)	27.18			
	Planned a change – did not realize it (2)	33.27			
	Made a change – attracting factors (3)	26.33	2.94	0.03	1-2, 2-3
	Made a change – repulsive factors (4)	30.01			

Group labels as in table 1.

Results of one-way analysis of variance and the multiple comparisons post hoc test indicate statistically significant differences among participants regarding job satisfaction ($F = 7.84$; $p = 0.001$), positive affect ($F = 12.34$; $p = 0.000$), and negative affect ($F = 2.94$; $p = 0.03$). The highest job satisfaction and the most favourable balance

of emotions at work are experienced by persons who have made pivotal career changes because of developmental motives. They feel the greatest intensity of positive emotions ($M = 48.80$) and the least intensity of the negative ones ($M = 26.33$). Persons who have abandoned their previous career path because of negative factors (which were pushing them away from their previous workplace) may be also acknowledged as satisfied with their present professional situation in the emotional aspect (positive emotions: $M = 44.30$). At the same time these persons feel intense negative emotions at work ($M = 30.01$). The post hoc test shows significance of differences in positive emotions among all the examined groups. The lowest emotional satisfaction is experienced by persons who have abandoned their plans to make a change ($M = 35.21$). They feel the strongest negative emotions at work ($M = 33.27$), and this is what presents a statistically significant difference from persons who have managed to realize their plans because of developmental reasons and also from those who are attached to their workplaces and do not plan any changes ($M = 27.18$).

Tendency to risk and optimism as related to job satisfaction and affect at work after a career transition

The following analysis is aimed at answering the question: May personal characteristics such as tendency to risk and optimism be acknowledged as predictors of job satisfaction and positive and negative affect at work among persons who have made a career transition?

Table 3. Results of multiple regression analysis: tendency to risk and optimism as predictors of job satisfaction and affect at work among persons who have made a career transition

Predictor	<i>Beta</i>	<i>B</i>	Standard error <i>B</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Job satisfaction in persons who have made a career transition because of positive reasons					
Optimism	0.40	0.46	0.16	3.23	0.001
Tendency to risk	0.32	0.50	0.24	2.53	0.04
$R = 0.34$ $R^2 = 0.17$ $F(5.46) = 22.30$; $p < 0.0001$					
Job satisfaction in persons who have made a career transition because of negative reasons					
Optimism	0.30	0.55	0.30	2.16	0.05
$R = 0.24$ $R^2 = 0.09$ $F(2.41) = 16.30$ $p < 0.001$					

cont. table 3

Positive affect at work in persons who have made a career transition because of positive reasons					
Optimism	0.49	0.53	0.11	4.08	0.001
Tendency to risk	0.23	0.48	0.24	2.32	0.05
$R = 0,40$ $R^2 = 0,19$ $F(4,36) = 22,90$; $p < 0,0001$					
Positive affect at work in persons who have made a career transition because of negative reasons					
Optimism	0.43	0.49	0.18	4.20	0.001
$R = 0.29$ $R^2 = 0.11$ $F(4.01) = 17.05$; $p < 0.0001$					
Negative affect at work in persons who have made a career transition because of positive reasons					
Optimism	-0.21	-0.40	0.21	-2.31	0.05
Tendency to risk	-0.45	-0.55	0.15	-4.78	0.001
$R = 0.38$ $R^2 = 0.16$ $F(4.85) = 24.75$; $p < 0.0001$					
Negative affect at work in persons who have made a career transition because of negative reasons					
Optimism	-0.30	-0.51	0.13	-2.55	0.04
$R = 0.26$ $R^2 = 0.10$ $F(3.11) = 18.30$; $p < 0.001$					

The results of multiple regression analysis contained in table 3 indicate that the variance of job satisfaction and affect at work in persons who have made a pivotal career change because of positive reasons is related to both optimism ($Beta = 0.40$) and tendency to risk ($Beta = 0.32$). The value of multiple correlation coefficient for both the variables in the model equals $R = 0.34$. This model allows for 17% prediction ($R^2 = 0.17$) of the explained variable, i.e. job satisfaction. Whereas, positive affect at work may be predicted on the basis of optimism ($Beta = 0.49$) and tendency to risk ($Beta = 0.23$) in 19% ($R = 0.40$, $R^2 = 0.19$). Variability of negative affect at work displays 16% ($R = 0.38$; $R^2 = 0.16$) negative correlation with tendency to risk ($Beta = -0.45$) and optimism ($Beta = -0.21$).

In regression models made for persons who were influenced by factors that were pushing them away from the previous workplace, a statistical significance was observed only for optimism. This characteristics explains variance of job satisfaction in 9% ($R = 0.24$; $R^2 = 0.09$; $Beta = 0.30$), positive affect at work in 11% ($R = 0.29$; $R^2 = 0.11$; $Beta = 0.43$), and negative affect at work in 10% ($R = 0.26$; $R^2 = 0.10$; $Beta = -0.30$). In case of negative affect the course of dependence is of negative character.

Discussion

There were examined four groups of persons which differed with regard to stability of their career (stagnation – change) and reasons for introducing changes. The questions that were posed referred to differences in tendency to risk and optimism between persons who were realizing their previously selected professional path (persons who did not plan any changes and those who planned a change but abandoned from this decision) and persons who have introduced significant changes due to repulsive or attracting factors. The career transition consisted in giving up the role of an employee-subordinate and starting one's own enterprise after a relatively long (at least 10 years) period of working at one place. Furthermore, there were analysed differences among examinees with regard to varied aspects of job satisfaction. There was searched a relation between present job satisfaction, positive and negative affect at work, and personal dispositions considered in the study.

Significant differences were found between employees who were continuing their previous career and persons who had realized a pivotal decision and started their own business activity. In the light of the performed studies, entrepreneurs appear to be more willing to risk and more optimistic. The lowest level of these characteristics is displayed by persons who planned a change but finally have given it up and continue their previous career. This observation corresponds with results of the research that was carried out by Perosa and Perosa (1983). They indicated that willingness to take risk was the most significant factor which differentiated persons who were introducing some serious career changes from those who did not do it. Thus, conclusions of the studies by Heppner, Multon, and Johnston regarding readiness to take risk among persons who make career transitions (1994, In: Hall, 2006) have been confirmed. Zhao, Seibert and Lumpkin (2010) have carried out a meta-analysis which indicates that the dependence between acceptance of risk and readiness to manage a company is positive (weighted arithmetic mean for the effect 0.30) but it is not related to a period of existence at the labour market nor other parameters of business success (innovation, profitability). It is proved by Macko and Tyszka (2005, 2009), who refer to their own research as well as outcomes of a number of studies conducted by other authors (Begley, Bond, Carland et al., Steward et al.), that entrepreneurs are characterized by a higher intensity of tendency to risk than non-entrepreneurs are. Also Zaleśkiewicz and Piskorz (2011) indicate that entrepreneurs come from among persons with heightened tendency to take risk, yet this regularity is not related to searching for stimulating risk but to a different – as compared to non-entrepreneurs – assessment of a risk level in a particular situation. Entrepreneurs estimate risk differently because of their dispositional optimism, which is above average (Rauch, Frese, 2007). Moreover, acceptance of risk in entrepreneurs refers to financial risk, not the physical one (Studenski, Studenska, 2011).

The obtained results refer also to outcomes of the research on the role of optimism in the process of making the decision to start one's own enterprise that was

conducted by Shook, Preim and McGee (2003) and to results of the study regarding personal differences (also in optimism) between entrepreneurs and persons who prefer the role of an ordinary worker, obtained by Markman and Baron (2003). It is beyond doubt that effective implementation of planned changes is favoured by a set of personal resources. Laguna (2010) quotes an analysis by Heslin and Wang, who point to a set of factors that effectiveness in achieving one's goals is based on. They comprise such stable traits as tendency to rivalry, conscientiousness, or self-esteem. Some characteristics that are prone to changes are also important, for instance: the sense of control, belief in one's own effectiveness, and positive affect.

The displayed outcomes refer to some previous studies among persons who have made serious career changes and those who have not (Biegańska, 2014). They have confirmed the role of the basic personality factors (the Big Five Model) and also the generalized sense of one's own effectiveness. Persons who make a career transition have been found to be more convinced of their own effectiveness, more extravert, more conscientious, less neurotic, and less agreeable, especially in comparison to persons who have not realized their plans about career changes. Thus, the present and previous research results indicate personality differences between persons who realize their goals successfully and those who abandon their plans.

Taking into account the data presented above it may be presumed that one of reasons responsible for not realizing their previous plans by some of the examinees and not starting a new stage in their career consisted in too low intensity of tendency to risk and optimism in this group. One should also not forget that such an abandonment may be a result of insufficient personal motivation caused by a low level of repulsive or attracting factors.

The analysis of levels of general job satisfaction in the examined groups shows that a pivotal career change, no matter whether there are attracting or repulsive factors, is favourable and related to higher satisfaction. Similar research conclusions were drawn by Perosa, Perosa (1983), Chudzikowski (2012) and Hall, Suddarth (2015). Persons who have taken the decision to start their own company because of developmental reasons are the most satisfied ones and they experience higher positive and lower negative affects at work. A totally different situation refers to persons who have abandoned their previous plans to change work and have stayed at the previous workplace. These workers experience markedly less positive emotions and more negative emotions than the remaining participants of the study. The ability to realize a pivotal career change, especially if it comes down to enterprise, is probable an indicator of possessing numerous psychological resources, which facilitate functioning and favour achievements, and finally may be related to job satisfaction.

The analysis of multiple regression, which was used to examine the predictive role of optimism and tendency to risk for satisfaction and affect at work, was performed separately for persons who had made a career transition because of attracting factors and those who had been directed by repulsive factors. In case of the first group, both optimism and tendency to risk have turned out to present significant

predictors of satisfaction and affect at work. On the basis of the models that were tested, there were found 17% variability of general satisfaction, 19% variability of positive affect, and 16% variability of negative affect as dependent on optimism and tendency to risk. In case of entrepreneurs who had started their companies because of repulsive factors, only optimism appeared significant (variance of general satisfaction 9%, positive affect 11%, negative affect 10%). Thus, it ought to be acknowledged that dispositional optimism, meant as a positive expectation regarding conditions and results of one's activities, is related to all aspects of job satisfaction in a significant way. This applies to both the groups of entrepreneurs who differ as for reasons of the changes they have introduced. The obtained result supports the respective outcomes of other studies on relations between optimism and subjectively felt job satisfaction (Zalewska, 2003; Argyle, 2004; Czerw, Borkowska, 2010). Czerw (2010) draws attention to the motivational character of optimism, which consists in strengthening tendencies to undertake careless and risky activities and accepting novelty and conditions that have not been typical for a given person. These traits are characteristic of the situation of making a pivotal turn in one's career. As compared to tendency to risk, optimism ought to be referred to as more universally related to job satisfaction in persons who make changes. Yet, this does not diminish the role of tendency to risk. Managing a company is inevitably linked with uncertainty, often indefinite rules, and unpredictability of the market. Lack of acceptance or even tolerance of risk could disturb harmonious functioning in the role of the owner of an enterprise.

The analysis presented above proves that realization of courageous changes in one's career is linked with personal characteristics, and also with higher job satisfaction and experiencing positive emotions, no matter which reasons have led to the decision. However, the current study has some limitations, so generalization of the obtained results needs to be done with caution. The study participants started the role of entrepreneurs as a consequence of a career transition. Entrepreneurs have been included in psychological studies for many decades. It is evidenced that people who are active in business display psychological resources that are above average (Baron, 2007; Łaguna, 2010; Witkowski, 2011; Zaleśkiewicz, Piskorz, 2011; Baron, Hmieleski, Henry, 2012) and they enjoy higher life quality and job satisfaction than general population does (Tarnawa et al., 2014; Czapiński, Panek, 2015). Therefore, while planning some further studies on pivotal career decisions one should consider some other professional groups as well. In the conditions of enlarged dynamics at the labour market and greater mobility of workers, psychological determinants and consequences of introducing significant career changes present a promising field of psychological research. It is recommended that relevant research models should include a broad spectrum of psychological characteristics that are potentially important for taking career decisions and for job satisfaction in the broad sense.

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SKŁONNOŚĆ DO RYZYKA I OPTYZMIZM
A SATYSFAKCJA Z PRACY PRZEDSIĘBIORCÓW
W KONTEKŚCIE PRZEŁOMOWEJ ZMIANY KARIERY ZAWODOWEJ

Streszczenie. W artykule sformułowano koncepcję przełomu w karierze oraz zaprezentowano wyniki badań empirycznych dotyczących uwarunkowań skłonności do wprowadzania zmian w przebiegu swojej kariery zawodowej ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem czynników podmiotowych. Następnie zaprezentowano wyniki badań własnych przeprowadzonych w czterech grupach: osoby, które nie planują żadnych zmian w karierze ($n = 42$); osoby, które zmianę planowały, ale zrezygno-

wały z niej ($n = 45$); osoby, które podjęły przełomową decyzję w karierze, kierując się motywem pozytywnym ($n = 49$), i osoby, które dokonały zmiany w karierze z powodów negatywnych ($n = 42$). Zmiana w karierze oznaczała założenie firmy i podjęcie roli przedsiębiorcy. Wyniki badań wskazują różnice pomiędzy wymienionymi grupami w obszarze satysfakcji z pracy, pozytywnego i negatywnego nastroju w pracy, a także optymizmu i skłonność do podejmowania ryzyka. Osoby, które dokonały przełomu w karierze, kierując się motywem pozytywnym, uzyskują najwyższe wyniki w zakresie satysfakcji z pracy, a także optymizmu i skłonności do ryzyka.

Słowa kluczowe: przełom w karierze, skłonność do ryzyka, optymizm, satysfakcja z pracy

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