

## THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL GOALS AND GENDER ON NEGOTIATION

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### **Abstract**

*This study presents the results of a survey that tested the influence of gender and type of goal (social vs. pecuniary) on Romanian people's perceptions regarding perseverance in obtaining what they demanded and risk to project a negative image by negotiating. It was observed that women were more afraid than men that people would judge them negatively if they negotiated for a personal, pecuniary objective, but not when they followed a social one. Women perceived themselves as pursuing with higher determination their goals when they were driven by a social motivation, compared to the perseverance reported by men. Understanding negotiators' behavior – perceptions, emotions, and actions – is the first and most important step towards success, understood as creation and implementation of agreements that are efficient, fair, and equitable for all parties.*

**Key words:** negotiation, social, gender, image, perseverance, perception

**JEL classification:** D12, F51, M39

### **1. Introduction**

Human behavior is the result of the diverse influences of many factors and negotiation is no exception to this rule: stimulating and deterring factors conduct each bargaining process towards a specific manifestation. Negotiation is a way of getting what you want from others, through back-and-forth communication designed to reach an agreement when all sides have both common and conflicting interests [9]. The study of negotiation is important for many reasons: because of the frequency with which it is used, of the fact that it is the most important way to cover needs and solve conflicts, and of the negative consequences to be endured in its absence.

Communication skills, especially persuasion ones, and mastery of implementing the right negotiation strategies and tactics are the main drives of negotiation success and they all rely on a profound knowledge of negotiators behavior (both own and partners' behavior) – interests, needs, preferred tactics and strategies, emotional characteristics, values, etc. [6, 8, 10, 13, 15, 16, 23]. Among the countless number of variables with significant effect on negotiation (power, time, information, gender, etc.), four were selected for the present study: negotiator's perseverance in trying to convince the partner to give him/her what he/she wants, fear that he/she will project a negative image if he/she negotiates, type of goal, and gender. Perseverance in pursuing the target it usually fosters success, but there can be exceptions, when being too insistent generates the opposite effect to the desired one or when too much dedication to the objective make the person lose his/her emotional balance and objectivity. The idea that one will generate a negative image through bargaining deters the negotiation and it is commonly encountered, especially among women, but also among men, in cultures where the politeness norms deprecate bargaining, labeling the one who negotiates as lacking generosity, stingy and unsympathetic to the needs of others. The goal may be self-oriented or altruistic, according to who's interest are followed or economic, social, environmental or other, according to the nature of the subject under discussion, and its typology can have a significant impact of participants' behaviors. For instance, Reinders Folmer et al (2012)[18] found out that in response to the responsibility of negotiation on behalf of others, agents may display a competitive mindset (which can boost gains or, on the contrary, be harmful). Among all influencing variables, gender is one very often investigated, due to the diversity of situation in which is involved and to the high number of people affected by differences derived from it. Thus, Riley Bowels and Babcock (2013)[19] studied how gender influenced propensity to negotiate and showed that women faced a dilemma when they decided to get involved in a negotiation: they compared the benefits of negotiating against the social consequences of having negotiated. The reason of such behavior stems from the fact that female negotiators are penalized for initiating a bargaining process, perceived as inconsistent with their roles [21]. Babcock and Laschever (2003) [2] demonstrated that men have a higher propensity to negotiate and Hederos Eriksson and Sandberg (2012) [11] concluded that gender of the counterpart can also have an impact on the initiation of negotiation. Even more than that, the perceived gender of the negotiation topic itself (which can be seen as feminine or masculine) can influence the attitude towards bargaining [3]. Boyer et al (2009) [4] observed that approaches used by women to facilitate interaction were different (more messages) from those used by men and

changed the nature of interaction (more collaborative). Gender influences deception behavior, too, as it was discovered that men set lower ethical standards and indicated greater deceptive intent compared to women in negotiations [12]. In such a context, addressing the issue of gender influence on negotiation requires the understanding of many situational circumstances [20], among which the ones investigated here – perseverance and social acceptance.

## 2. Goal and novelty

The aim of the present paper is two folded: to understand if a social goal has a different impact on the perception on the level of the personal effort made for winning (perseverance) and on the perception on the risk to project a negative image by negotiating, compared to a pecuniary goal; and to observe if gender has an influence on the same variables. Negotiation is a largely investigated subject at international level, from a wide array of perspectives, but the comparison between the influence of two goals – pecuniary and social – on targeted variables and their analysis for the Romanian population are original elements of this study.

## 3. Material and method

The results are based on a non-probabilistic survey, which used a convenience sample of 202 persons, from Romania, 39% of them men and 61% women. Two factors with opposite effects on perceptions related to negotiations were studied: a stimulating factor – perception on the level of the personal effort made for winning (perseverance) and a hindering factor – perception on the risk to project a negative image by negotiating. They were both investigated in two scenarios: a pecuniary one, when people imagined they pursued a monetary and personal gain, and a social one, when subjects pictured themselves negotiating on behalf of others, for an altruistic goal (the benefit of children who needed their help). The influence of gender on the mentioned perceptions was also analyzed (Table 1). Data analysis was carried out in Excel and SPSS version 21. The Mann-Whitney U test was used to compare differences regarding an ordinal variable between two groups. Wilcoxon test was applied to evaluate differences between two measures of the same group. The relationship between two ordinal variables was investigated using Spearman’s Rank Order Correlation. The level of statistical significance was set at  $p < 0.05$ .

Table 1. Variables investigated in the study

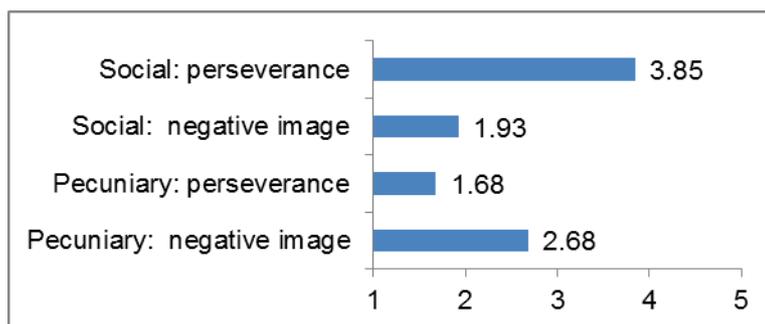
Type of variable	Variable	Categories of the variable
1. Dependent	1.a. Perception on the level of the personal effort made for winning (perseverance)	very small, small, average, high, very high
	1.b. Perception on the risk to project a negative image by negotiating	very small, small, average, high, very high
2. Independent	2.a. Type of goal	pecuniary (fighting for a personal financial gain) and social (advocating for others)
	2.b. Gender	women and men

Source: author’s elaboration

## 4. Results and discussions

Perceptions related to both dependent variables were tested (regardless of gender) on a Likert scale of five points (from 1 = minimum to 5 = maximum) and the results were favorable to the social negotiation. The perseverance is 2.3 times higher in the case of a social motive and the fear to project a negative image by engaging in a bargaining process is 1.4 times weaker when people deal with an altruistic topic compared to a personal and monetary one (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Level of perceived negative image acquired and of perceived self-perseverance in following the goals in pecuniary and social negotiations (scores)



Source: author's elaboration, based on survey results

#### *The influence of gender on perceptions related to image and perseverance*

Real and perceived gender differences in society are generally based on two sources: biological differences and social construction of gender roles [4]. The first group refers to specificity generated by one persons' gender which makes him/her to have specific skills and capacities (physical or emotional) and to be inclined towards certain views and actions. The latter includes the roles people assume and are expected to perform, based on their sex, roles that are culturally determined, varying in time and space, and are constantly changing, through the influence of practice, interaction, and evolution of ideas and norms [4, 22 apud 4] . Differences investigated here are rooted in the second category regarding public image and in both groups in the case of perseverance.

In the present study, according to Mann Whitney U test, women are more afraid than men to project a negative image by negotiating when they fight for a personal and pecuniary gain ( $p < 0.05$ ; Table 2), which may alter the initiation of negotiation. Small et al (2007) [17] observed that women had a stronger negative view of negotiating for things than of asking for things (while men perceived similarly the two actions – negotiating and asking), because women were socially punished if they negotiated [17]. However, when the goal is altruistic (social oriented), differences fade and no statistically significant ones between genders are present ( $p > 0.05$ ; Table 2). Women estimate higher efforts for pursuing their goals compared to men, for the social cause, suggesting a stronger dedication to it ( $p < 0.05$ ; Table 2). There is no statistically significant difference regarding the perseverance, in the financial scenario ( $p > 0.05$ ; Table 2). Other aspects of the negotiation are influenced, too, by the type of goal and gender: in the case of women, the outcome of the negotiation was better when they negotiated on behalf of others compared to the situation when they negotiated for themselves, while this did not matter for men, who performed equally well in both situations [1].

Table 2. Mann-Whitney U test results for differences according to gender related to perceived risk of projecting a negative image by negotiation and perceived perseverance in obtaining what was demanded when a business goal was followed and when a social one was pursued

a) Ranks				
	9.2. Gender	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Pecuniary: negative image	M	78	90.58	7065.00
	F	124	108.37	13438.00
	Total	202		
Pecuniary: perseverance	M	78	110.32	8605.00
	F	124	95.95	11898.00
	Total	202		
Social: negative image	M	78	105.03	8192.50
	F	124	99.28	12310.50
	Total	202		
Social: perseverance	M	78	91.55	7141.00
	F	124	107.76	13362.00
	Total	202		

b) Test Statistics <sup>a</sup>				
	Pecuniary: negative image	Pecuniary: perseverance	Social: negative image	Social: perseverance
Mann-Whitney U	3984.000	4148.000	4560.500	4060.000
Wilcoxon W	7065.000	11898.000	12310.500	7141.000

Z	-2.159	-1.882	-.723	-2.002
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.031	.060	.470	.045

a. Grouping Variable: 9.2. Gender

Source: author's elaboration, based on survey results

Spearman's Rank Order Correlation coefficients revealed that the higher is the fear to create a negative image by negotiating, the weaker is the estimated effort made to win a negotiation (strengths and direction of relationship: weak, negative), within each scenario (pecuniary:  $r=-.274$ ,  $p=0.000$  and social:  $r=-.223$ ,  $p=0.001$ ; Table 3). Therefore fear to look bad is a negotiation hindering factor

Table 3. Spearman Spearman's Rank Order Correlation results for the strength and direction of the linear relationship between perceived risk to project a negative image and perceived self-perseverance in obtaining what was demanded

		Correlations				
		Pecuniary: negative image	Pecuniary: persev.	Social: negative image	Social: persev.	
Spearman's rho	Pecuniary : negative image	Correlation	1.000	-.274**	-.069	.175*
		Coefficient				
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.328	.013
		N	202	202	202	202
	Pecuniary: persev.	Correlation	-.274**	1.000	.104	.055
		Coefficient				
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.139	.434
		N	202	202	202	202
	Social: negative image	Correlation	-.069	.104	1.000	-.223**
		Coefficient				
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.328	.139	.	.001
		N	202	202	202	202
Social: persev.	Correlation	.175*	.055	-.223**	1.000	
	Coefficient					
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.013	.434	.001	.	
	N	202	202	202	202	

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Source: author's elaboration, based on survey results

#### *The influence of nature of the goal on perceptions related to image and perseverance*

Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test was run in order to understand the influence of the nature of the goal on the two dependent variables (fear to create a negative image by negotiating and perceived perseverance in negotiation to attain the established objectives). It was observed that the perception on the risk to project a negative image by negotiating was significantly lower in the social context compared to the economic one (Table 4). In other words, the social, altruistic nature of the goal, tempered the reluctance to negotiate. Thus, a very important negotiators' feature is revealed – that they are sensitive to the nature of the goals in relation to image concerns and perseverance. Such finding can, for example, be useful in the efforts of reducing the fear of negotiation of some persons, by offering them incentives (such as fighting for an altruistic purpose) to carry on the negotiation. The nature of the motive, however, does not always influence negotiation behavior: thus, a comparison between the effect of a pecuniary and environmental goal on the propensity to initiate a negotiation (on a similar sample of Romanian subjects) showed no difference [14].

Table 4. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test results for differences between the levels of perceived risk to project a negative image by negotiation when a pecuniary goal is followed compared to a social goal

		a) Ranks		
		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Social: negative image – Pecuniary: negative image	Negative Ranks	102 <sup>a</sup>	80.33	8194.00
	Positive Ranks	44 <sup>b</sup>	57.66	2537.00
	Ties	56 <sup>c</sup>		
	Total	202		

a. Social: negative image &lt; Pecuniary: negative image

- b. Social: negative image > Pecuniary: negative image  
c. Social: negative image = Pecuniary: negative image

b) Test Statistics<sup>a</sup>

<b>Social: negative image - Pecuniary: negative image</b>	
Z	-5.599 <sup>b</sup>
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.000

- a. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test  
b. Based on positive ranks.

Source: author's elaboration, based on survey results

In accordance with the previous results, Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test showed that the type of goal has a positive impact on perseverance: people struggle more for a social purpose than for an economic one ( $p < 0.05$ ; Table 5). These findings are in line with those of Wade-Benzoni et al (2002) [24], who argued that in ideologically based disputes (in this case, the social scenario) people behave differently from other types of negotiations. Similarly, De Dreu et al (2000) [7] discovered that negotiators were less contentious, engaged in more problem solving, and achieved higher joint outcomes when they had a social objective. Remaining in the same ethically focused area, but expanding the discussion towards fairness, participants to a cross cultural study (from USA and Japan) demonstrated through their behavior that when their beliefs about fairness coincided with self-interest, what was believed to be fair has a significant influence on negotiation behavior, but it did not alter it when fairness perceptions and self-interest contradicted each other [5].

Table 5. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test results for differences between the levels of perceived perseverance in obtaining what was demanded when a pecuniary goal is followed compared to a social goal

a) Ranks		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Social: Perseverance – Pecuniary: Perseverance	Negative Ranks	5 <sup>a</sup>	33.60	168.00
	Positive Ranks	179 <sup>b</sup>	94.15	16852.00
	Ties	18 <sup>c</sup>		
	Total	202		

- a. Social: perseverance < Pecuniary: perseverance  
b. Social: perseverance > Pecuniary: perseverance  
c. Social: perseverance = Pecuniary: perseverance

b) Test Statistics<sup>a</sup>

<b>Social: perseverance – Pecuniary: perseverance</b>	
Z	-11.624 <sup>b</sup>
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.000

- a. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test  
b. Based on negative ranks

Source: author's elaboration, based on survey results

Further investigation of the subject, with a probabilistic sample, the study of the actual behavior rather than investigation of perceptions on a possible behavior, and more variables included in the analysis (additional stimulating and hindering factors, cultural differences etc.), would enhance the information provided by the present paper, for the benefit of those interested in how negotiators think and act.

## 5. Conclusions

Tested Romanian negotiators behave differently according to gender and type of goal. Women are more afraid than men that people will judge them negatively if they negotiate for a pecuniary gain, but this fear is weaker when they advocate for others, for a social purpose. Proving commitment to a good cause, women are willing to fight more than men to achieve their negotiation objectives when these are altruistic. The fact that they are negotiating for a good, social motive makes people (regardless of gender) to pursue it with higher dedication and to be less afraid of projecting a negative image, compared to a situation when they are driven by a monetary and personal purposes.

The practical implication of these findings are that if women believe the risk of damaging their image by negotiating is high, they might not initiate the negotiation, which, in some cases, makes them lose opportunities for them and for others. The study also suggests who (a man or a woman) would be a better negotiator in a specific

context, from the point of studied variables. Such information can help in reaching fairness and equity in business and ideological (environmental, social, etc.) negotiations.

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