

DRIFTING, NOT DRIVING – IDENTITY STRUCTURE ANALYSIS TO EXPLORE ENTREPRENEURIAL IDENTITY

SODRÓDNAK, NEM VEZETNEK – KISVÁLLALKOZÓK IDENTITÁSÁNAK VIZSGÁLATA AZ IDENTITÁSSTRUKTÚRA-ANALÍZIS MÓDSZERÉVEL

This study is an exploration of entrepreneurial identity, employing a culturally sensitive mixed methods approach, Identity Structure Analysis (ISA). The sample includes 30 small/micro entrepreneurs in Southern-Transdanubia, Hungary. Hungary had introduced some “staccato” economic reforms in the previous social system, changing communist hostility towards entrepreneurs as “capitalists” into lasting ambivalence. The results reflect indistinct commitments to entrepreneurial values; constant adaptation to environmental factors instead of building own strategies; and limited future expectations. In the two sub-samples of male and female entrepreneurs there were no statistically significant differences. The dominant, masculine discourse of entrepreneurship, the underdevelopment of social enterprises in Hungary, the impact of the previous communist discourse understanding equality as sameness, and the pandemic-induced crisis may explain for these findings.

Keywords: entrepreneurial identity, identity structure analysis, post-communist environment, communicative memory, ecosystem, gender differences, Covid-19 pandemic

A tanulmány a vállalkozói identitás vizsgálatát tűzi ki célul. A szerzők által alkalmazott módszer, az identitásstruktúra analízise (ISA) kulturális tényezőkre érzékeny, kevert módszertan. A dolgozat mintája a dél-dunántúli régióban élő 30 kisvállalkozó. Magyarország a rendszerváltás előtt már többször próbálkozott gazdasági reformok bevezetésével, amelyeknek nyomán a vállalkozókkal, mint „kapitalistákkal” szembeni ellenségesség tartós ambivalenciává alakult. Az eredmények a vállalkozók értékek mentén történő bizonytalan elköteleződését, saját stratégia építése helyett a környezeti tényezőkhez történő folyamatos alkalmazkodásukat és korlátozott jövőképüket mutatják. A férfi és női vállalkozók között nem mutatkozott statisztikai szempontból szignifikáns eltérés. Ezeknek az eredményeknek a háttérében a vállalkozói lét domináns, férfias diskurzusa, a társadalmi vállalkozások hazai alulfejlettsége, a korábbi kommunista diktatúra egyenlőséget egyformaságként értelmező gyakorlata, és a pandémiás válsághelyzet együttesen állhat.

Kulcsszavak: vállalkozói identitás, identitásstruktúra elemzése, posztkommunista környezet, kommunikatív emlékezet, vállalkozói ökoszisztéma, nemek közötti különbségek, Covid-19 pandémia

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This paper reports a context-sensitive, dynamic analysis of entrepreneurial identity in a sociocultural environment of a former dictatorship, where economic stability has been missing, and the public perception on entrepreneurial activities has been ambivalent.

Entrepreneurial identity, as a main determinant of success in business life, has only recently become a central area in entrepreneurship studies. Identity is critical to motivation, decision making, and several other aspects of behaviour (Jones et al., 2019; Weinreich, 2004). In their review article, Ollila, Middleton and Donnellon (2012) claim that entrepreneurial identity, important as it is, is still an under-researched area. Previous studies often focused on typologies and entrepreneurial traits, introducing a useful but static approach, which tells relatively little about the dynamic, cyclic processes of becoming an entrepreneur (Markowska et al., 2015; Leitch & Harrison, 2016), and is often insensitive to the paramount role of contextual influences from the sociocultural context (Morris et al., 2018; Bell et al., 2018). Jones and associates (2019) have suggested that contextual impacts should be made subject of in-depth investigations, as these factors greatly affect and inform entrepreneurs' decision making.

Identity is a broad concept in the social sciences. One's identity is "the totality of values, attitudes, memories, convictions, aspirations, and reflections that are unique to an individual" (Hogard, 2014, p. 1). It is understood as one's self-construal, with a distinct sense of continuity in time. Identity is not only a set of reflective self-meanings but is also a means of giving meaning to one's experiences (Hoang & Gimeno, 2010). This is not to say that one's memories are the sole determinants in the development of identity. Future aspirations as a main, general concern for humans also have a fundamental role (Kelly, 1995; Weinreich, 2004; Lundquist et al., 2015). Identity development is influenced by one's personal experiences, role expectations and external feedbacks to these from one's relational network (Weinreich, 2004; Demetry, 2017; Hoang & Gimeno, 2010; Lundquist et al., 2015). Social constructionist and discursive views highlight the role of contextual, social, and symbolic-linguistic resources in identity formation (Harré, 1998).

Personal identity is individualized, but one's multiple *micro-identities* that make up *the identity*, that is, one's totality of self-construals, are related to group membership and external validations (Jones et al., 2019; Demetry, 2017). In this way, identity is a bridge between the individual's unique, deeply personal existence and their social context.

It demands definite skills, competencies, and attitudes (Ollila et al., 2012). An influential work on entrepreneurial qualities and social mission by Schumpeter (1934/1983, p. 93) has created the hero's story of a highly competitive, dominant, creative, and success-oriented self-made man: "the dream and the will to find a private kingdom, usually, but not necessarily, also a dynasty." This early definition was meant to embrace all the common aspects in entrepreneurial identity and provided an initial "vocabulary of motives" (Demetry, 2017; Bell et al., 2018; Dodd, 2002).

This is reflected in today's conceptions on the leaders of start-up ventures (Király, 2020; Kézai & Konczosné Szombathelyi, 2020). Empirical research has identified 12 core competencies as identity elements: creative, accessible, inspiring, motivating, able to make decisions, flexible, agile, fair, motivated, ethical, and outcome-oriented (Kassai, (2020, p. 65). Entrepreneurial identity, however, is not uniform. Personal attitudes and preferences as well as group-based elements and larger cultural constructs as resources are integrated into one's entrepreneurial identity, and all these are manifested in distinct perspectives (Krátki & Kiss, 2021). Gruber and McMillan (2017) differentiated between the following orientations:

- *Darwinian* entrepreneurs' priority is own economic gain. They are highly competitive and follow a well-known and traditional business logic.
- *Communitarian* entrepreneurs' strong embeddedness into a value-based community differentiates them from the more self-oriented and individualistic members of the previous group.
- *Missionary* entrepreneurs have clearly defined prosocial goals and a strong sense of responsibility for the welfare of the society (Gruber & McMillan, 2017; Jones et al., 2019). *Social* entrepreneurs, the "missionary" group, work for the benefit of others, utilizing entrepreneurs' general skills (Ruskin et al., 2016; Krátki & Kiss, 2021).

The wider public, the institutions and the entrepreneurs themselves often define a conclusive event or experience supporting their decisions to become entrepreneur. This narrative reconstruction on the development of entrepreneurial identity is underpinned by administrative measures, research, and various education programmes in business schools (Király, 2020). However, the choice today seems less conscious and predetermined. The development of entrepreneurial identity is usually an emergent process marked by uncertainties, hesitations, halts, and resummptions (Demetry, 2017; Lundquist et al., 2015; McNabb, 2004). George, Jain and Maltarich (n.d.) in their analysis on entrepreneurial identity development among academics also debate the idea that the transition can be conceived as a discrete departure. *Nascent* entrepreneurs may begin their career as "hobbyists", due to recent changes in the world of work ensuring more flexibility and bringing about blurred boundaries between one's private and work-based roles. This autotelic, "labour of love" orientation does not focus on mass production, but on product quality: "too much venture growth could compromise their authenticity" (Demetry, 2017, p. 200).

To sum it up, entrepreneurial identity is not only constructed, but is subject to continual reconstructions over time, just like any other forms of identity. A general preference for stability narratives ("has always been like this...") (Gergen & Gergen, 1997) may disguise this important and universal characteristic. This is problematic, as entrepreneurs would probably need different educational resources as they proceed through these developmental cycles (Király, 2020).

Female entrepreneurs

Research orientation on female entrepreneurs is mostly embedded in the feminist discourses. Ahl (2006) in his comprehensive analysis has compared Sandra Bem's masculinity and femininity indexes to the attributes associated with entrepreneurship. She has found that entrepreneurs' descriptions are gendered. Entrepreneurs are labelled as self-reliant, independent, strong willed, assertive, strong, resolute, willing to take risks, having leadership abilities, seeking power, competitive and courageous. Femininity words were either the opposites of entrepreneur qualities (e.g., "shy" or "childlike") or missing from the descriptions (e.g., no mentions as "sensitive to others' needs", "sympathetic" or "understanding") (Ahl, 2006, pp. 5–6). Emerging new forms, as "mompreneurs", self-employing rural women, and social entrepreneurs (Csurgó, 2019; Huszák, 2018) will probably challenge this discursive hegemony in the future. A European study (Ifempower, 2020), with very little specific data on Hungary, has claimed that:

„Women's motivations to join the business life ranged from opportunity to necessity, the first including the wish to develop a hobby into business, exploit a market opportunity, while the last referred to the lack of flexibility of the labour market or the inability to perform both roles – as mother and as workers – adequately. Among the challenges encountered throughout their career, women entrepreneurs highlighted problems related to work-life balance, access to finance and the lack of role models“ (Ifempower, 2020, p. 49).

An early study on women entrepreneurs in Hungary by Gere (1996) came to similar conclusions. At the same time, Kézai and Konczosné Szombathelyi (2020) point out that women entrepreneurs have an increasing role in the national economy. McNabb (2004) used Weinreich's Identity Structure Analysis to study possible differences between female and male entrepreneurs. Her results have revealed a rejection of conventional gender roles among women, and a higher level of identity diffusion, attributed to increased tensions between family and business life. She has concluded that *“Entrepreneurial women appear to have difficulty combining their desire for professional success with particular constructions of femininity...”* (McNabb, 2004, p. 293).

Strategies

When becoming an entrepreneur, the individual must work to integrate the emerging new identity into the existing identity and adopt strategies on how to handle other micro-identities, such as family, gender, or ethnic identity (Markowska et al., 2015; McNabb, 2004). A possible strategy is *compartmentalization*, keeping the different, often conflicting aspects of the superordinate identity separate. *Integration*, on the contrary, is about merging these elements into an organized complexity and building possible synergies between them (Shepherd & Patzelt, 2018). When

the novel entrepreneurial identity and the previous identity elements are highly conflicted then the chances to abandon the venture are high (Demetry, 2017). The extensive use of ICT-tools, globalization, and the limitlessness of the virtual space (“always online”) *have rendered compartmentalization* as an identity strategy *more difficult*. These features are conducive to integration, if not enmeshment of boundaries between private and work-based identities, a possible source of conflict for (not only) women entrepreneurs (Ifempower, 2020; McNabb, 2004).

The immediate and broad social context, cultural traditions and individual preferences all have their impact on one's choice of a strategy (Shepherd & Patzelt, 2018). Available narrative resources for identity development provide the person with a “vocabulary of motives” as well as a “vocabulary of justification” to explain and give meaning to past or planned behaviour (Demetry, 2017).

The Hungarian context: Traditions and current challenges

The narrative resources for identity reconstructions come from one's cultural and communicative memory. Cultural memory is historical and mythical, to be learnt from formalized texts, rituals, and iconic resources. Communicative memory is a powerful transgenerational legacy, an influential stock of stories from one's immediate socialization network with one's significant others as the carriers of these personalized stories (Assmann, 2011; Kovács, 2012). Hungary has a specific position among the Central and Eastern European countries with its earlier, consumerist “goulash communism” traditions. In the Kádár-era the private sector had a complementing role to alleviate the rigidity of the centralized economic system, but genuine competition was not allowed. While in January 1957, 5791 licensures were issued for entrepreneurs, the 1958 data equals only to 1129 licensures. The sector was to provide employment for additional workforce and services in rural areas – with no prospects to flourish and grow (Laki, 1998).

The ruling regime was ambivalent about the reforms. The entrepreneur and their family, together with the intelligentsia were categorized as “other” (an identity label evoking shame and inferiority), in contrast with working class people identified as the leading class in the contemporary system. Between 1968 (the year of the introduction of the New Economic Mechanism) and 1989, the year of the system change, reforms were introduced in fits and starts. The 1968 reforms to improve the private sector were withdrawn in the early 1970s. The centralized planned economy, however, was characterized by increasing debts, weak quality products and, lacking any incentives, by an overall low performance. Economic unsustainability of Hungary's economy led to the re-introduction of reforms concerning the private sector in the 1980s. Mixed organizational forms were established, and ineffective state corporate forms were complemented by corporate cooperatives. Small entrepreneurs were encouraged to participate in and improve the declining performance of the state-based economy (Laki, 1998).

After the transition of the social system in 1989, the Hungarian society has experienced many significant, challenging transformations and crisis states, such as the 2004 accession to the European Union, the 2008 global financial crisis and the current global crisis induced by the Covid-19 pandemic with its pervasive impact on business ventures (GEM, 2021). The state socialist legacy is an integral part of people's communicative memory, directly influencing their values and attitudes in all areas of life. Ruling through ambivalence and unpredictability, and its consequent self-censorship are the key elements of this legacy, reducing the effectiveness of economic and legal reforms. Robinson (2007) argues that clientelism, patronage and corruption have become integral part of the post-communist economic and political systems. Currently, Hungary ranks the 69th of 180 countries in corruption, with a drop of 11 since 2012 (Transparency International, n.d.). The persistence of these negative features is due to distortions and inconsistencies in the value system (e.g., what is required is sanctioned) and the accompanying attitudes on the one hand, and to the rapid transformations and recurrent crises states in the Hungarian society in the past few decades on the other hand.

The sense of ownership, understood as obtaining some private property, has not been fully eradicated by the communist system. While in 1989, in the year of the system change, there were 320,000 enterprises, by 1995, the number rose above 800,000, with an increase of ten per cent among women. However, this was mainly due to loss of job security and to lack of flexible employment forms. Defining an "entrepreneur" was not easy in those days: for some, it simply meant self-employment, or free-lance work, while others ran a foundation or an association, but that was not the exact equivalent of a western-type social enterprise. Sometimes employees were forced into founding a venture as this way their employer could escape the obligation to pay the allowances. Ambivalent public perceptions have prevailed: entrepreneurs were considered courageous individuals, having strong potentials for initiating economic growth, and, at the same time, immoral tricksters exploiting others (Gere, 1996).

According to a recent survey (2020) there were 1810356 enterprises in Hungary, of which 556191 were private entrepreneurs (Hungarian Central Statistical Office, 2020). Social enterprises – a form that is somewhat hard to interpret in the current Hungarian economic and legal system – are on the increase (Huszák, 2018; Krátki & Kiss, 2021).

Women's position

Women were said to have more rights in the communist era. Socialist feminists considered women's oppression a result of capitalist exploitation. Equality of rights in Hungary were included in the 1949 Constitution. Special policies (e.g., full employment policy and a limited quota system in political life) and social services (kindergartens) supported women's entering the labour market. Gender equality was conflated with women's presence in the labour market and in education (Fodor, 2002). Women's

active role in the labour market became widely accepted (Kézai & Konczosné Szombathelyi, 2020). However, traditional forms of the division of labour, differences in salaries, and the related gender stereotypes did not change. Women were not considered to be able to reach an appropriate level of political consciousness and devotion, at least not without being patronized and educated by men as their rational superiors (Fodor, 2002). Social and public services were not widespread and could not reduce the double workload of full employment and traditional household chores. Feminism mostly meant an invitation towards traditional masculine positions and orientations (such as the appearance of "proud" women tractor drivers) and served the purposes of economic growth through maximizing available workforce (Schadt, 2003). Today, tensions between employment and care influence women's chances in the labour market and are a main motivation for them to start a business where they can combine their working and caring roles in a more flexible manner (Kézai & Konczosné Szombathelyi, 2020).

Currently, power scores of the Gender Equality Index in Hungary are the lowest in political power in the European Union, the country ranking 22nd in women's economic power. Further, Hungary has the second poorest social scores in the same scale (Gender Equality Index, n.d.). Unfortunately, neither the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (2021), nor the GEM 2018/2019 Women Entrepreneurship Report (2019) published any data on Hungary. The rate of women start-up entrepreneurs is only 14% in Hungary, a rate similar to the European average (Kézai & Konczosné Szombathelyi, 2020).

Measuring identity – Identity structure analysis (ISA)

Identity research is often single theory-driven, further, the measures applied are targeted at some aspect of one's identity: gender, ethnicity, or profession (Passmore, Ellis & Hogard, 2014). Weinreich (2004) in his Identity Structure Analysis synthesizes several classical theories – among others, by Erikson (1968), Mead (1934, cit. Weinreich, 2004), Kelly (1955), Festinger (1957), Berne (1968) and Harré (1998) – on self and identity. Weinreich conceives identity development as a process of identifications and a result of appraisals in one's social world, an arena of potential conflicts and tensions: "A person's appraisal of the social world and its significance is an expression of his or her identity" (Weinreich, 2004, p. 5). Identity is the totality of one's self-construals, with a continuity between one's past experiences and future aspirations (Weinreich, 2004, p. 20). The overarching, still remarkably coherent ISA theory is complemented by a framework software, a combination of emic (qualitative) and etic (quantitative) components, reflecting on the structural, common elements of one's identity, but also admitting its uniqueness. ISA has a linked framework software, Ipseus, which is not a traditional psychometric test. It yields an insight into the dynamics of identity construction (Hogard, 2014) – thereby filling the gap that Jones and associates (2019) could

detect when reviewing existing studies on entrepreneurial identity. ISA/Ipseus enables the researcher to develop an instrument that is highly sensitive to social and cultural differences. It has been used extensively in international research projects, including organizational studies, and for purposes of workplace selection, staff development and education. ISA/Ipseus is both internally and externally standardized, that is, the results can be compared to the results of a general (European) sample, to the group's own results (nomothetic use) and to the individual's own results in ideographic studies (McNeill, Erskine, Ellis & Traynor, 2019, p. 61; Erskine & Ellis, 2017).

An ISA/Ipseus instrument is customized for the main goals of the research, and to the culture of respondents. Building the instrument requires a substantial literature review and targeted qualitative explorations, such as observations, interviews, expert opinions, discourse analysis or focus groups. This is how the researcher defines the domains and themes of the investigation. Domains refer to spatial and temporal contexts of the social interactions, such as past experiences, future aspirations, role models, private or work-based situations. These are transformed into entities. An entity can be anything that has an evaluative connotation – some distinctive quality – and is relevant for the study. Themes should be important issues for the respondents and are related to the main questions of the research, as, for example, innovation, business ethics, or autonomy at work. These translate into bipolar constructs. The entities and the constructs together make up the discourses to be appraised by the respondents (Weinreich, 2004; 2010a; 2010b). ISA/Ipseus has a specific research logic that is manifested in iterative statements. This is how the following areas can be explored:

- respondents' preferences (values) related to main themes,
- emotional significance of the themes,
- respondents' self-evaluation in a variety of contexts,
- the nature of their relationship to other relevant entities,
- conflicted areas.

ISA/Ipseus also enables comparisons between persons or groups and between an individual's or a group's developmental phases (Weinreich, 2004; Hogard, 2014; Passmore, Ellis & Hogard, 2014).

Results of the content analysis (interviews and texts)

We have analysed several interviews conducted with Hungarian entrepreneurs to identify the main themes and domains (links to these interviews are provided together with ISA/Ipseus data). Themes included:

- service- success- and quality orientation vs. marketing strategies to sell weak quality products,
- willingness to extend one' comfort zone through innovations and risk-taking,
- reliance on family traditions,
- unique creativity,
- the lonely hero; a hero against the whole world,

- pressures to make a living,
- lack of stability,
- entrepreneurial identity learning and the ability to learn from one's faults,
- others' envy,
- difficulties in the integration of the different roles (women balancing between entrepreneurial and private life while men striving for individual success).

The Hungarian Small Entrepreneur Instrument

Although an ISA/Ipseus instrument is relatively easy to fill in, and further, it is adapted to the word use of the respondents, it is advisable to keep it as short as possible, especially with a sample largely characterized by "time is money" orientation. Domains and hence entities included three temporal perspectives of the self (past, present, and future), role models, as well as models for contra-identification ("who I am" and "who am I not"). As regards the central role of external evaluations and validations in identity development (Demetry, 2017, p. 195), external entities were introduced that either have something in common with entrepreneurs, or on the contrary, have very different qualities or have a major impact on their lives. For example, a typical politician is characterized by leadership potentials and autonomy, also influencing the life of an entrepreneur; whereas a typical state employee is often seen as a counter point of an entrepreneur, immersed in the nine-to-five routine, receiving regular pay checks (Bell et al., 2018).

Table 1

Entities		
#	Label	Classification
01	When I decided to become an entrepreneur	Past Self
02	Currently, I	Current Self
03	In five years, I	Future Self
04	Ideally, I	Currents Self
05	Contra-ideally, I	Contra Ideal Self
06	When I am to solve a difficult problem	Exploratory Self
07	The successful entrepreneur	Admired Person
08	The bad entrepreneur	Disliked Person
09	A typical state employee	–
10	The person who envies me	–
11	The forced entrepreneur	–
12	A typical politician	–

Source: Own instrument applying Weinreich (2010) ISA/Ipseus framework. Copyright: Identity Exploration Ltd. (Small Entrepreneur Instrument)

Themes and hence constructs included:

- relational vs. individual orientation (teamwork, success),
- compartmentalization vs. merging of identity (business and family, role of business in one's life),

- risk-taking vs safety (occupational safety, innovative attitude vs. well-known solutions, risk-taking),
- resilience (failures as lessons; building trust),
- ethics, rules (quality-oriented, ethical, adherence to rules),
- decision-making (reliance on others, intuitive/rational).

Domains were translated into entities (see Table 1) and themes were translated into constructs (see Table 2):

Table 2

Constructs		
#	Label Left	Label Right
01	counts on oneself	follows others' advice
02	autonomy as priority	occupational safety
03	prefers to work alone	work in team
04	well-known solutions	innovations
05	takes risks	wants safety
06	marketing sells well	quality sells well
07	intuitive decisions	rational decisions
08	failures as lessons	failures are unbearable
09	business/work is a means of making a living	business/work is one's own life
10	human relations	self-actualization and success
11	flexible about ethical principles in business	truly ethical conduct in business
12	trust is important in business	should be precautionary in business life
13	business and family life should be kept separate	business and family cannot be separated
14	adheres to rules and regulations	flexible about rules and regulations

Source: Own instrument applying Weinreich (2010a) ISA/Ipseus framework. Small Entrepreneur Instrument

Research questions & hypotheses

It was expected that the specific sociocultural environment, shaped by soft dictatorship traditions with its peculiar ruling technique, the lessons of the 2008 global crisis, the domestic and regional ecosystem and the unpredictable situation brought about by the Covid-19 global-level crisis would have a marked influence on small entrepreneurs' identity development and current statuses. ISA/Ipseus yields an insight into respondents' view on their own development by iteratively using past, present, and future perspectives in the appraisals. It was hypothesised that these differences are not salient, that is, respondents' future visions are only slightly better than their perceptions on past and current self-states. Entrepreneurs do need future visions to lead a venture, but the current context is not about encouraging great expectations. Further, it was assumed that in this situation, entrepreneurs would be characterised by lower levels of identity diffusion. Diffusion can be positive under certain circumstances, e.g., it may refer to respondents' openness; but high levels are also associated with insecurity and, if accompanied by low self-evalu-

tion, with crisis states (Weinreich, 2004). As for external entities, it was expected that successful entrepreneurs would be positively evaluated while the evaluation of other entities would be low or negative, mostly with moderate ego-involvement. High emotional investments into such relations would reduce their capacity to maintain and develop their businesses.

It was expected that *the traditional soft dictatorship* ambivalence concerning entrepreneurship as well as the unpredictability of the socioeconomic environment would be represented in respondents' appraisals of the specific constructs. ISA/Ipseus differentiates between pressured, core, secondary, conflicted, and contradictory constructs. These are defined by the level of structural pressure (SP) "...the overall strength of compatibilities over incompatibilities between the evaluative connotations of attributions..." (Weinreich, 2004, p. 50) – briefly, SP is a measure of coherence. A high number of secondary and conflicted constructs were expected to be identified, because a well-defined strategy, indicated by more core constructs and higher levels of ego involvement in ISA/Ipseus, can be built only in a predictable environment.

ISA/Ipseus was also used to investigate if there are any differences between female and male entrepreneurs. One such difference could be men's more individualistic and women's more networking orientation (McNabb, 2004). Consequently, it could be predicted that there would be a more Darwinian (competitive) and less missionary (solidarity-driven) attitude among men than among women. However, entrepreneurship is perceived as a traditional "masculine" area (Ahl, 2006), and – a further complicating factor – state socialist traditions laid a great emphasis on gender similarities over differences in the world of work. In addition, crisis states often minimise the differences and generate a common pathway for adaptation. Accordingly, a substantial level of similarity between male and female entrepreneurs is also a possibility. It has been difficult to form a clear-cut hypotheses in this unexplored area, however, broad hypotheses suggest higher conflicts between entrepreneurial roles and family roles among women than men.

Sample

The sample for the study was a convenience sample of small/micro entrepreneurs with self-employment as a core characteristic. Sampling was significantly influenced by two factors: due to Covid-19 restrictions, inviting the respondents into the research was much more difficult – we had to rely on our existing social network. Further, many entrepreneurs were rather frustrated and experienced a financial instability because of the economic problems brought about by the pandemic. After experiencing unusual difficulties in data gathering, a regional organisation was contacted, and this is how it was possible to include altogether *three* more cases. The final sample included 30 entrepreneurs, 13 female and 17 male, age range 25 and 58 ($M=40.17$; $SD=10.15$). The mean duration of entrepreneurship in the sample is

$M=100.60$ months (with the range 6–240). Respondents had different educational backgrounds, ranging from secondary-level vocational training to university degrees. The rate of the respondents with secondary and tertiary education was 2:3, and both genders were evenly represented in these sub-groups. Respondents mainly represented the areas where social contacts are a priority (services, non-food retail, and education) and only a few (5) of them could transfer their business activities (IT services and education) into online platforms.

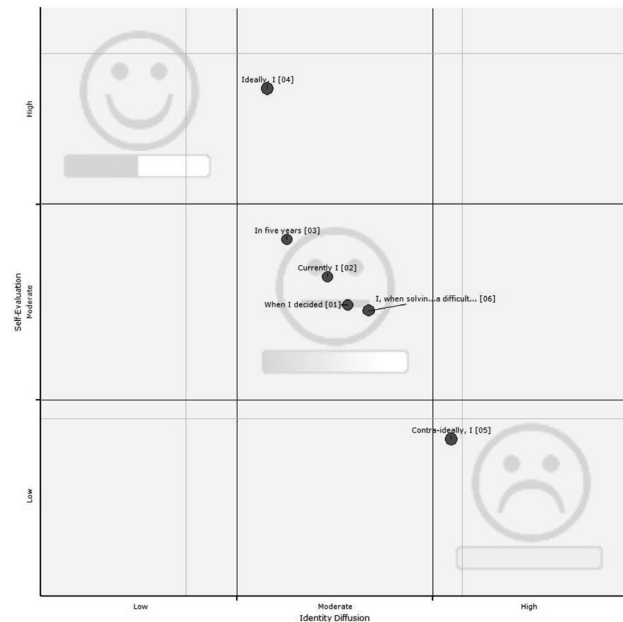
Results

Interpreting the totality of ISA/Ipseus results would exceed the frameworks of a single article. The focus is on self-evaluations, self-development, entity evaluations, construct evaluations, and patterns of identification to address the broad research questions. ISA/Ipseus output files provide the researcher with some easy-to-use information on key identity parameters. Naturally, the results can be made object of a traditional statistical analysis. This study utilizes both features in presenting and analysing the data.

1. Self and Entity Evaluation

Figure 1

Self Summary
(Self-evaluation and diffusion, 30 individuals)

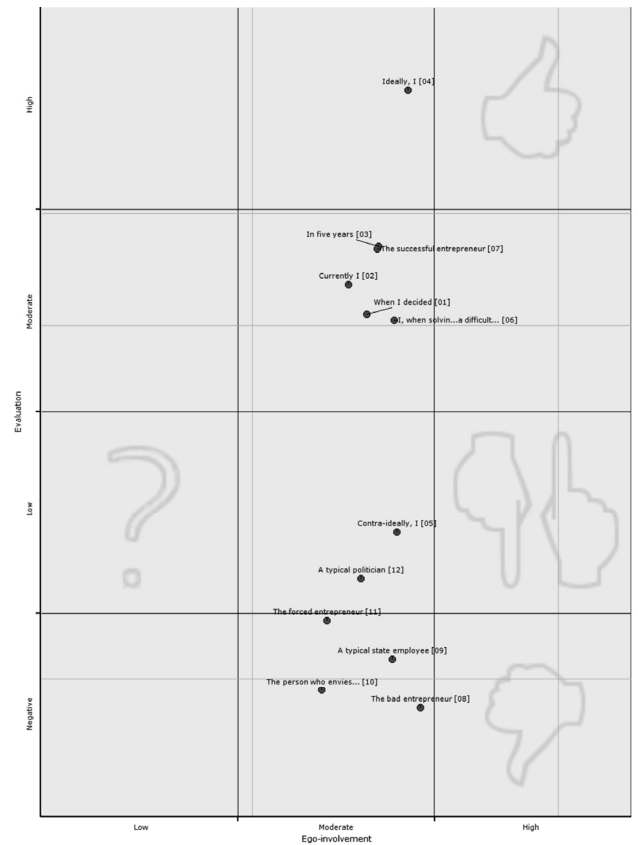


Source: Own results from the ISA/Ipseus Small Entrepreneur Instrument

The thick lines represent the in-built European standards while the thin lines are the group standards. This figure shows that entrepreneurs do not envisage a bright future, as the position of the future self is in the moderate zone. However, there is some progression, both in terms of evaluation and in the expected reduction in identity diffusion (Figure 1).

Figure 2

Entity summary (30 individuals)



Source: Own results from the ISA/Ipseus Small Entrepreneur Instrument

The evaluation of entities (Figure 2) has brought an unexpected result: Hungarian entrepreneurs’ worst is probably not bad enough, that is, the position of their contra-ideal selves is not negative and is higher than those of five external entities. Rejection of negative attributes related to own self possibly serves as a specific form of defense, a result of hostile-ambivalent sociocultural traditions – and of the current, vulnerable pandemic situation. This interpretation is strengthened by the overall picture where most of the self-positions are in the moderate zone, quite close to “Successful Entrepreneur”, that is, the positive role model is not evaluated as high as the Ideal Self. Ego-involvement is only moderate with all the entities, showing relatively low-level commitments – a precarious attitude.

Statistical analysis

The question may arise whether the differences of the self-positions are statistically significant. IBM SPSS Statistics 26.0 was used, and Paired Samples t-Test was applied to identify any significant changes in Past–Current–Future self. For the significant results, Effect size was also computed ($d = t / \sqrt{N}$). To interpret the Effect size Cohen’s (1988) guideline was used: 0.2 (small effect), 0.5 (moderate effect) and 0.8 (large effect).

A significant difference was found between Ego-Involvement currently and Ego-Involvement in the future ($t(29) = -2.984; p = .01; p < .05$), with a moderate effect size ($d = .54$) and with higher values in future self ($M_{current} = 3.13$

Table 3

Changes in Past/Current/Future Self – a sample of 30 individuals

	t	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	Effect size (Cohen's d)
Ego-Involvement in the past vs. Ego-Involvement currently	1.370	29	.18 (n.s.)	–
Ego-Involvement currently vs. Ego-Involvement in the future	-2.984	29	.01*	.54
Ego-Involvement in the past vs. Ego-Involvement in the future	-.919	29	.36 (n.s.)	–
Self-evaluation in the past vs. Self-evaluation currently	-1.529	29	.14 (n.s.)	–
Self-evaluation currently vs. Self-evaluation in the future	-2.350	29	.03*	.43
Self-evaluation in the past vs. Self-evaluation in the future	-4.023	29	.00**	.73
Identity-diffusion in the past vs. Identity-diffusion currently	.918	29	.37 (n.s.)	–
Identity-diffusion currently vs. Identity-diffusion in the future	2.561	29	.02*	.47
Identity-diffusion in the past vs. Identity-diffusion in the future	4.751	29	.00**	.87

Sig. *p<.05, **p<.01

Source: Own compilation

Table 4

Differences between males and females – Entity and Self tabulation

	t	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Ego-Involvement – Past Self	-.506	24	.62 (n.s.)
Ego-Involvement – Currents Self	-.985	24	.33 (n.s.)
Ego-Involvement – Future Self	-1.057	24	.30 (n.s.)
Ego-Involvement – Ideal Self	-1.579	24	.13 (n.s.)
Ego-Involvement – Contra Ideal Self	-.305	24	.76 (n.s.)
Ego-Involvement – Exploratory Self	-1.542	24	.14 (n.s.)
Ego-Involvement – Admired Person	-.488	24	.63 (n.s.)
Ego-Involvement – Disliked Person	-.004	24	.99 (n.s.)
Ego-Involvement – Typical state employee	.605	24	.55 (n.s.)
Ego-Involvement – Person who envies	1.458	24	.16 (n.s.)
Ego-Involvement – Forced entrepreneur	-.143	24	.88 (n.s.)
Ego-Involvement – Typical politician	.137	24	.89 (n.s.)
Self-evaluation – Past Self	.069	24	.95 (n.s.)
Self-evaluation – Currents Self	-.337	24	.74 (n.s.)
Self-evaluation – Future Self	-1.229	24	.23 (n.s.)
Self-evaluation – Ideal Self	-.958	24	.35 (n.s.)
Self-evaluation – Contra Ideal Self	-.653	24	.52 (n.s.)
Self-evaluation – Exploratory Self	.111	24	.91 (n.s.)
Self-evaluation – Admired Person	-.685	24	.50 (n.s.)
Self-evaluation – Disliked Person	-.287	24	.77 (n.s.)
Self-evaluation – Typical state employee	-.867	24	.39 (n.s.)
Self-evaluation – Person who envies	-.458	24	.65 (n.s.)
Self-evaluation – Forced entrepreneur	.125	24	.90 (n.s.)
Self-evaluation – Typical politician	-.825	24	.42 (n.s.)
Identity-diffusion – Past Self	.550	24	.59 (n.s.)
Identity -diffusion – Currents Self	.458	24	.65 (n.s.)
Identity -diffusion – Future Self	.887	24	.38 (n.s.)
Identity -diffusion – Ideal Self	.090	24	.93 (n.s.)
Identity -diffusion – Contra Ideal Self	.133	24	.89 (n.s.)
Identity -diffusion – Exploratory Self	-.658	24	.52 (n.s.)

Sig. *p<.05, **p<.01

Source: Own compilation

and $M_{future} = 3.43$). No differences were found between the other Ego-Involvement results in the different self-development states (see Table 3).

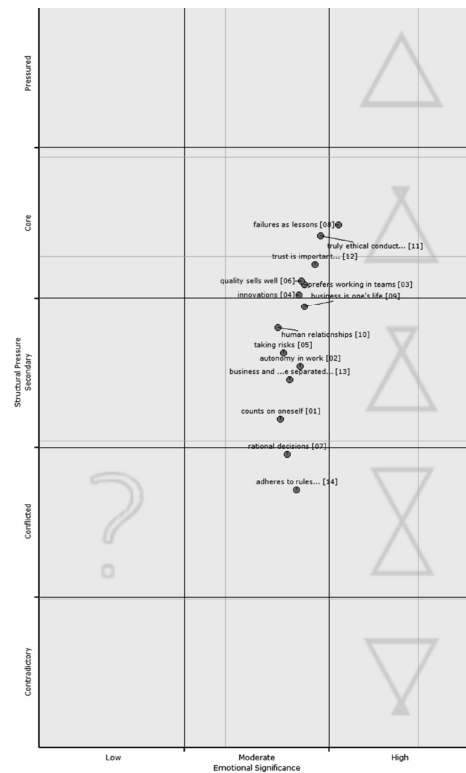
The most convincing results were found in the dimension of Self-evaluation and Identity-diffusion. Self-evaluation currently is lower than Self-evaluation in the future ($t(29) = -2.350; p = .03; p < .05$), with a nearly moderate effect size ($d = .43; M_{current} = .58$ and $M_{future} = .69$), and Self-evaluation in the future is higher than Self-evaluation in the past as well ($t(29) = -4.023; p = .000; p < .05$), with a nearly large effect size ($d = .73; M_{past} = .49$ and $M_{future} = .69$) (see Table 3).

A difference can be discerned between Identity-diffusion currently vs. Identity-diffusion in the future ($t(29) = 2.561; p = .02; p < .05$), with a nearly moderate effect size ($d = .47$) and with higher values currently ($M_{current} = .32$ and $M_{future} = .29$). The difference between Identity-diffusion in the past and Identity-diffusion in the future is also significant ($t(29) = 4.751; p = .000; p < .05$), with a large effect size ($d = .87$) and with higher values in the past ($M_{past} = .34$ and $M_{future} = .29$). No difference was found between Identity-diffusion in the past vs. Identity-diffusion currently (see Table 3).

Statistical analysis on gender differences: Self and Entity data

The next step was to compare males and females along the Entity and Self tabulation with Independent Samples t-Test. First gender ratios were balanced using randomly

Figure 3 Emotional significance and Structural pressure of the constructs (30 individuals)



Source: Own results from the ISA/Ipseus Small Entrepreneur Instrument

Table 5 Preferred constructs, their emotional significance and structural pressure – Whole sample

	N	#	Polarity	Emotional Significance	Structural Pressure	+ve Component	-ve Component	N	
counts on oneself	25	01	-1	6.65	23.81	45.17	21.36	5	follows others' advice
autonomy as priority	21	02	-1	7.20	30.77	51.38	20.61	9	occupational safety
prefers to work alone	5	03	1	7.31	44.92	59.02	14.11	25	prefers to work in team
well-known solutions	5	04	1	7.17	41.25	56.47	15.21	25	innovations
takes risks	24	05	-1	6.74	32.62	50.00	17.37	5	wants safety
marketing sells well	4	06	1	7.24	46.34	59.36	13.02	25	quality sells well
intuitive decisions	11	07	1	6.84	18.20	43.32	25.12	19	rational decisions
failures as lessons	29	08	-1	8.13	66.76	74.03	7.27	1	failures are unbearable
business/work is a means of making a living	4	09	1	7.32	38.86	56.01	17.16	25	business/work is one's own life
human relations	22	10	-1	6.59	36.02	50.95	14.92	7	self-actualization and success
flexible about ethical principles in business	0	11	1	7.76	62.81	70.19	7.38	30	truly ethical conduct in business
trust is important in business	25	12	-1	7.61	52.40	64.23	11.83	5	should be precautious in business life
business and family life should be kept separate	7	13	1	6.91	29.04	49.09	20.05	23	business and family cannot be separated
adheres to rules and regulations	18	14	-1	7.10	8.50	39.76	31.25	12	flexible about rules and regulations

Source: Own results from the ISA/Ipseus

selected cases, N=13 men ($M_{age}=40.38$; $SD=10.04$) and N=13 women ($M_{age}=41.85$; $SD=11.27$) for accurate results.

There was no statistically significant gender difference between the two groups (see Table 4).

Constructs

The 30 respondents' preferred poles are summarized in Table 5 and Figure 3.

Statistical analysis on gender differences

Chi Square Statistics was used to identify possible

differences in the preferred constructs. No gender differences were found in this analysis (see Table 6). Men and women shared the same values and orientations in business life.

We examined the emotional significance and structural pressure associated with the constructs, also looking for gender differences. Along the emotional significance of the constructs, we did not find any gender differences (see Table 7).

Along the structural pressure of the constructs, we did not find gender differences either (see Table 8).

Table 6

Gender differences in the preferred poles

	Male	Female	χ^2	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
counts on oneself vs. follows others' advice	11/2	12/1	.377	1	.54 (n.s.)
autonomy as priority vs. occupational safety	10/3	7/6	1.529	1	.22 (n.s.)
prefers to work alone vs. work in team	1/12	1/12	.000	1	1.00 (n.s.)
well-known solutions vs. innovations	3/10	2/11	.248	1	.62 (n.s.)
takes risks vs. wants safety	10/1/2	10/0/3	1.200	2	.55 (n.s.)
marketing sells well vs. quality sells well	3/1/9	1/0/12	2.429	2	.30 (n.s.)
intuitive decisions vs. rational decisions	4/9	4/9	.000	1	1.00 (n.s.)
failures as lessons vs. failures are unbearable	13/0	12/1	1.040	1	.30 (n.s.)
business/work is a means of making a living vs. business/work is one's own life	3/10	1/12	1.182	1	.28 (n.s.)
human relations vs. self-actualization and success	10/1/2	9/0/4	1.719	2	.42 (n.s.)
flexible about ethical principles in business vs. truly ethical conduct in business	0/13	0/13	–	–	–
trust is important in business vs. should be precautious in business life	10/3	12/1	1.182	1	.28 (n.s.)
business and family life should be kept separate vs. business and family cannot be separated	4/9	2/11	.867	1	.35 (n.s.)
adheres to rules and regulations vs. flexible about rules and regulations	9/4	6/7	1.418	1	.23 (n.s.)

Sig. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Source: Own compilation

Table 7

Gender differences in Emotional significance of the Constructs

	Mmale	Mfemale	t	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	Effect size(Cohen's d)
ES – construct 1	7.42	5.85	2.106	24	.05 (n.s.)	–
ES – construct 2	14.39	6.13	1.288	24	.21 (n.s.)	–
ES – construct 3	7.56	6.83	.795	24	.43 (n.s.)	–
ES – construct 4	7.57	6.83	1.125	24	.27 (n.s.)	–
ES – construct 5	6.96	6.23	.839	24	.41 (n.s.)	–
ES – construct 6	7.25	7.32	-.068	24	.95 (n.s.)	–
ES – construct 7	7.39	5.85	1.779	24	.09 (n.s.)	–
ES – construct 8	8.33	7.60	1.284	24	.21 (n.s.)	–
ES – construct 9	8.13	6.48	1.572	24	.13 (n.s.)	–
ES – construct 10	7.25	5.81	1.406	24	.17 (n.s.)	–
ES – construct 11	8.40	6.95	1.917	24	.07 (n.s.)	–
ES – construct 12	7.43	7.24	.265	24	.79 (n.s.)	–
ES – construct 13	7.05	6.47	.827	24	.42 (n.s.)	–
ES – construct 14	7.16	6.78	.500	24	.62 (n.s.)	–

Sig. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Note: ES=emotional significance; For constructs, please see Table 2; Source: Own compilation

Gender differences in Structural pressure of the Constructs

	Mmale	Mfemale	t	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	Effect size (Cohen's d)
SP – construct 1	46.97	27.17	1.622	24	.12 (n.s.)	–
SP – construct 2	43.80	22.69	1.466	24	.16 (n.s.)	–
SP – construct 3	50.14	48.26	.134	24	.89 (n.s.)	–
SP – construct 4	47.00	44.80	.172	24	.86 (n.s.)	–
SP – construct 5	47.09	37.89	.745	24	.46 (n.s.)	–
SP – construct 6	46.66	52.14	-.365	24	.72 (n.s.)	–
SP – construct 7	38.51	31.75	.621	24	.54 (n.s.)	–
SP – construct 8	73.21	64.94	.999	24	.33 (n.s.)	–
SP – construct 9	48.99	45.51	.219	24	.83 (n.s.)	–
SP – construct 10	56.66	39.30	1.434	24	.16 (n.s.)	–
SP – construct 11	63.48	57.08	.552	24	.59 (n.s.)	–
SP – construct 12	56.43	38.05	1.183	24	.25 (n.s.)	–
SP – construct 13	49.42	45.47	.371	24	.71 (n.s.)	–
SP – construct 14	30.34	44.57	-1.346	24	.19 (n.s.)	–

Sig. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Note: SP=structural pressure

For the constructs, please see Table 2

Source: Own compilation

Identifications

ISA/Ipseus automatically computes the degree of idealistic (“want to be like...”) contra- (“does not want to be like...”), empathetic (perceived degree of similarity, either good or bad), and conflicted (a parameter based on contra- and empathetic identifications) identifications and the respective parameter ranges (see Table 9).

Parameter ranges differ only slightly for the two groups. Both males and females strongly identified themselves with the *Successful entrepreneur* (0.73 and 0.71 for idealistic, and 0.74 and 0.70 for *Current Self's* empathetic identification, respectively). Their identification was low only with the *Person who envies me* (0.10 for both genders). Respondents were not characterized by any other particularly high or low identifications.

Conclusions

In most societies, entrepreneurs are appreciated for their contributions to national and global-level economies as leaders, innovators, and job providers (McNabb, 2004; Király, 2020; Kassai, 2020). The hostility that developed into an ambivalent stance in the soft dictatorship economy of Hungary has left its marks on entrepreneurs' contemporary social positions, public perception, and identity development. The social context has not encouraged safe experimentation with alternative roles and identities, or the “identity play” of envisioning future possible selves, which seems a crucial factor in becoming an entrepreneur (Demetry, 2017). Presumably, communist conceptions on gender equality understood as sameness could be detected in women entrepreneurs' strategy to build

Table 9

Parameter ranges

Participant	M	SD	Min	<Lo	<Hi	Max
Male	N=17					
Identification						
Idealistic	0.32	0.25	0.00	0.07	0.57	1.00
Contra	0.47	0.31	0.00	0.16	0.78	1.00
Empathetic	0.36	0.26	0.00	0.10	0.62	1.00
Conflicted	0.32	0.21	0.00	0.11	0.53	1.00
Female	N=13					
Identification						
Idealistic	0.30	0.25	0.00	0.05	0.54	1.00
Contra	0.44	0.30	0.00	0.14	0.74	1.00
Empathetic	0.34	0.25	0.00	0.10	0.59	1.00
Conflicted	0.31	0.21	0.00	0.09	0.52	1.00

Source: Own results from the ISA/Ipseus Small Entrepreneur Instrument

a uniform identity, minimizing the impact of gender on their business orientations. The notions and practices of business feminism, emphasizing self-management skills and competition, are inevitably embedded in this historical context (Fodor et al, 2018). The organizational culture established by transnational enterprises and the domestic views on women's traditional responsibilities are distant realities, conducive to compartmentalization strategies in identity development. Our results are in accordance with the conclusions of previous research by Pisoni and Bielli (2015, in: Kézai & Konczosné Szombat-helyi, 2020) who claimed that women leaders of technological start-ups shared the same characteristics as men leaders. At the same time, they could not rely on external capital resources. The latter finding can be explained by Ahl's (2006) results about the salient differences between the descriptions of an ideal entrepreneur and a typical woman. Due to common stereotypes on women (Olasz, 2021), female leaders might be perceived as a source of risk of low returns by the investors.

Entrepreneurs' preferred construct poles indicate a value system that resembles Schumpeter's ideal, the autonomous, innovative, and risk-taking individual who can learn from their mistakes. Preference for human relations over personal success is a difference that may come from the characteristics of the sample. For small/micro entrepreneurs, building and maintaining human relationships is usually part of their business. Their identity strategy concerning business life and family life is more about integration than compartmentalization, irrespective of their gender, what corresponds to their self-employment status.

The ambivalence of the social context towards entrepreneurs, accompanied by the restrictive governmental strategies concerning private property and free market (Kornai, 2015) is clearly represented in the results. The impact of the Covid-19 crisis during data collection is a further complicating factor that could have influenced the outcomes of the study. Another factor is the regional-level ecosystem of the enterprises: the Southern-Transdanubian Region has some important resources such as universities and umbrella organizations (e.g., chambers of commerce and industry). However, the economic disadvantages are clearly reflected in the marked population loss in the region (HCCI, 2013). In this milieu, respondents did not seem to have a definite scheme that could manifest itself in well-defined preferences – instead, they have developed a survival strategy and choose whatever seems to work in the given context. They are drifting and not driving as they do not seem to possess a distinct personal strategy. They try to adapt themselves to the quickly changing environment; but this is not because they would not even want to build a strategy. Such a wish to optimise the level of identity diffusion is indicated in ISA/Ipseus results by entrepreneurs' envisioning less self-diffusion in the future than currently or in the past. Higher levels of diffusion indicate higher levels of conflicts and are related to transition states. An envisioned, less diffused self-state is more about knowing what they

themselves want. Further, it indicates less openness to change, as well as the wish for lower levels of conflicted identifications (Weinreich, 2004).

The two conflicted issues, decision-making and adherence to rules and regulations, together with the perceived importance of learning from one's faults and being truly ethical in business are also telling about their situation. Theoretically, rules and regulations should be closely connected to business ethics; while ethics is an abstraction, rules, ideally, should be about putting ethics into practice in everyday settings. The ability to learn from one's mistakes is related to making bad decisions; if the way decisions are made is a conflicted issue in a somewhat unpredictable environment, then this ability is crucial for small entrepreneurs' survival.

Naturally, the current study has its limitations. The quarantine situation and entrepreneurs' related economic and financial problems rendered data collection difficult, and could have influenced respondents' appraisals. The negative impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, especially among those whose business depends largely on personal contacts, is a significant factor. Possibly, in a more developed region, patterns of strategic thinking, a key competence identified by Király (2020) would be present. The political debates and conflicts preceding the oncoming 2022 national elections started much earlier than predicted, consequently, one of the entities (a typical politician) that had seemed both appropriate and informative in the designing phase could become a source for distortions, as an entity either attracting highly polarized statements or zero evaluations. Further, the sample is a convenience sample: *“one's sample will in part be defined by who is prepared to be included in it”* (Smith & Osborn, 2008, p. 56). However, the results could serve as a starting point for more extensive explorations. In addition to increasing – preferably doubling – our sample size, the contents or the wording of the entities and constructs that did not seem to work as expected should be modified. When conducting an ISA/Ipseus investigation, cross-cultural comparisons would add a lot to the explorations

Even under these circumstances, the study demonstrates the utility and potential of ISA/Ipseus in identity explorations. It is a comprehensive, flexible, and robust measure to investigate a variety of questions concerning group or individual identities. ISA/Ipseus investigations on entrepreneurial identity can shed light on values, visions, and conflicted areas in entrepreneurs' lives, thereby supporting the development, fine-tuning and evaluation of targeted education and coaching programmes to develop entrepreneurs' competencies (Kassai, 2020; Király, 2020). Such investigations could contribute to reducing the existing stereotypes of women entrepreneurs. Further, the studies could inform and help shape special policies in the service of economic development.

Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are openly available in the library repository of the University of Pécs at <https://pea.lib.pte.hu/handle/pea/24160>.

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