

**MENTAL REPRESENTATION OF MONEY CATEGORY AND EXPERTISE. THE INFLUENCES BY
GENDER AND AGE**

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[dx.doi.org/10.18374/EJBR-14-2.12](https://doi.org/10.18374/EJBR-14-2.12)

ABSTRACT

Nowadays, due to the current economic downturn, consumers are uncertain, afraid, and concerned about how the crisis affects the personal and economic futures. This research starts from the results of the studies of Snelders, Hussein, Lea & Webley (1992) and Rumiati & Lotto (1996 and 2006) that show how the mental representation of the “money” category should be different among people as they have different ways of handling money depending on their specific activities and on the different levels of expertise. Little has been done in terms of examining the Italian economical crisis context from a social-psychological point of view concerning money perception. The aim of this research is to investigate the differences in the perception of money by students, retailers and bank clerks, and how these differences depend not only from the expertise in handling money but also from gender and age. A replication study of the questionnaire of Rumiati & Lotto (2006) was done to confirm the evidence that showed that different exemplars of money are actually perceived as differently representative of the concept of “money”. Participants (210: 70 students, 70 retailers and 70 bank clerks) filled out the on-line questionnaire. We reached our goal through a Factorial Analysis of Variance and Covariance. The results show that there are some significant correlations between gender and perception money, as well as between the perception of money and the shift in the age and those perceptions are independent from the category (students, retailers and bank clerks) that we analyzed. Moreover, referring to the previous studies of Rumiati & Lotto (1996 and 2006), the perception of money changed in the Italian context in the last seven years and the economical crisis could be one of the main causes.

Keywords: *Money Perception, Gender, Age, Social Category*