



## WOMEN AS PROJECT MANAGERS

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### Abstract

On the one hand, we are currently experiencing a dynamic increase in the demand for project management. It involves the need of an organization to react to impulses to changes resulting from the imperative of improving efficiency and maintaining a competitive advantage. On the other hand, there is a tendency to increase the participation of women in the management (also in project management) and thus break the historically masculine domination.

These issues are still not fully recognized, and it is not just the question of who is better and why (gender aspect) but it is also the question of the factors that determine the successful implementation of women's projects. Additionally, the pursuit of development and optimization in their potential in the context of the growing companies' needs to be flexible and the ability to meet the challenges that the project managers face.

The research problem of this article can be summarized into a synthetic question: what is the role and participation of women in project management (in the context of their participation in the management of organizations in Poland) and what factors are important for the potential of women in managing projects now and in the future?

The aim of the article is to examine how the opportunities of the increasing participation of women in management, (especially in project management) have been used in the recent years in Poland, as well as to identify the factors which determine their effectiveness so far and in the future.

The article is based on a review of the subject matter and statistical data. It will be supported by the survey results. The results of this study will be used to illustrate the answers to the detailed questions connected with the research problem.

**Key words:** *project management, female project manager, project management efficiency, challenges for the project leader*

**JEL code:** L2, M1

### Introduction

It is an undeniable fact that for many centuries the role division between men and women has been sustainably marked. Except for some single cases, it did not allow the latter to participate in the social and economic life events and limited their business, public organizations and social management activities. Not until the gender equality was sanctioned in late 19<sup>th</sup> century, did women get broader access to participate in public life and management activities, taking the positions of supervisor/manager. This allowed women to access those activity fields that had so far been dominated by men. At the same time, circumstances to break through this male domination had arisen. In the middle of 1950's, women gained an increased participation in management, however, as shown by statistical data (WEF, 2016) from different countries and continents, these processes progress at different rates, various barriers to equalize participation ratio of men and women appear. This process is still ongoing, the difference between men and women participation on managerial positions is slowly diminishing. The result of the global research (Zenger J.H. & Folkman, J., 2017) conducted in 2017 by Zenger Folkman company (with participation of 7 000 managers) confirms, however, that disproportion between women and men percentage on all management levels still exists (management board: 78% men, 22% women; senior management: 67% men and 33% women; medium management and line management: 60% men and 40% women). According to the listing published in *Women in Business 2017* prepared by Grant Thornton (Grant Thornton, 2017), Poland can talk big about the high (40%) participation of women on top positions, while in other EU countries it is 25%. As demonstrated by the analysis of the changes in the last years, in many EU countries, the



number of women in management board positions goes down instead of growing (Dźwigoł-Barosz M., 2016). The occurrence of leaving high positions in the company and starting own business (*careerpreneur*) increases. Women seek opportunities for self-realization outside of the business, especially when it appeared to be a “men’s world” throughout, dominated by dogmatism, arrogance, competitiveness, liking for hierarchy, power display, etc.

#### **Role of women in organization management**

Increased participation of women in management bodies gave rise to the analysis of women’s role, identification of the results in management participation and attempts to find out whether they are better managers, whether they manage better than men. As shown by many (diverse in terms of methodology) studies of the topic, there is no unequivocal confirmation of these kinds of hypotheses/assumptions, e.g. G.N. Powell (Powell, G.N., 20013) states, that there are no reasons to deem that only women or only men can become good managers, discerning at the same time, that women have tendencies to manage democratically and men – autocratically. Results of this study rather emphasize that contemporary management that requires setting up ambitious goals/tasks and ensuring conditions essential for their efficient and effective attainment opens space for both sexes to operate (Wiecka A., 2014). Organizations who are not interested in taking advantage of this diversity, consciously deprive themselves of chances to improve effectiveness and strengthen their competitiveness. On the other hand, however, the increased participation of women in management should not be treated as simple antidote to its so far revealed ailments/”maladies.”

It is hard to fail to note that management styles of women and men may differ substantially, within the frames of ambivalent conceptualization of subject literature (Lisowska E., 2009) the male/traditional and female/modern people management styles have been defined (although the characteristics of these styles don’t have to be directly and permanently related to gender).

Facts presented in *Doktryna Ateny* (Gerzema J. & D’Antonio M., 2014) prove that female values are gaining importance since the world is already tired with the leadership model based on traditionally male features. Today, in order to conduct business, other values are necessary than those originating from the male work culture. In “the times affected by chronic unease” more presence of values /features defined as female is expected in the business and social life. It is being emphasized, that generalization of features and values traditionally attributed to women becomes the determinant of development, “operational system” of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is justified by women’s participation in the human population (in Poland, this indicator is at about 51,6%, it is also expressed by feminization ratio – in 2006 it was 106,5) (GUS, 2007). Of course, it is not about “annihilating the men’s world,” the goal here is to build a symbiosis of male and female features and thus, enhance the chances to function and grow in a more balanced reality.

Engaging women in management roles as a result of taking up professional work and conducting business has become an inevitable process when facing challenges related to further growth and effectiveness improvement in the economic and social field. This is fostered by the increasing self-awareness of women about the potential they have at their disposal. Tapping into this potential is served by mechanisms leading to overcoming of all sorts of social inequalities (which are still some kind of historical burden) and building adequate conditions to initiate/maintain professional activity of women (who respect, among others, women’s right to fulfill the mission of motherhood or women’s determined voice for work and work balance).

Angel Gurria, general secretary of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) states that “women are the most unused resource in the world’s economy” (Wittenberg-Cox A. & Maitland A., 2010). Researchers from Booz & Company (Women and the Economics of Equality, 2013) estimated, that in the current decade the labor market will be strengthened by about a billion women. This number equals the population size of China and India, i.e. countries that have in recent years turned into economic powers owing to their populations. Countries, enterprises working in economic conditions that are based on



knowledge, using the potential of women, strive to take advantage of their educational achievements, especially, that they are very well educated, e.g. in Poland in 2015 among women active on labor market, 42,3% had higher education (GUS, 2016).

In fact, it is not right to underestimate women as market participants (consumers), hence it is important to grant them part in important financial decisions related to efficient market strategies. It has been confirmed by empirical studies that companies who have women as management board members attain better results than those who have no female participation in management. And so, per the McKinsey report, in companies where at least 3 women were part of the management, the organizations achieved return on capital rate higher by 41% and operational results higher by 56%. This women representation of 30% is considered to be a „critical mass” that makes the efficiency of decision making of both men and women much higher (Dąbrowska E., 2014).

The above presented reasoning (albeit not complete) confirms the importance of granting women the right participation in the management. It is crucial due to the possibility to deepen the synergies coming from competency diversity, introduction of new features and values which enriches the management style and increases its quality. In doing so, it provides chances to enhance effectiveness of actions, to enhance competitiveness and innovativeness. In other words, it supports the fulfillment of the immanent needs of every organization on the market realizing the concept of balanced growth.

In the context of what most of the companies struggle with in terms of practical management, for example, the existence of a host of stereotypes and biases (glass ceiling/glass labyrinth, sticky floor, glass cliff, velvet nest, glass escalator) result in women having to wait for promotion in average 3 years and 8 months longer (Mizera M., 2008). Paying women less for working in the same function as men is an obvious discrimination. E.g. in United Kingdom, the difference noted by the Institute for Fiscal Studies is currently 18% (Closing the gender..., 2016), and in Poland, the salary gap between men and women is in average 19%, and on higher paid jobs it reaches 25% (Kobiety zarabiają w Polsce..., 2012) and unjustified a priori lack of trust in female manager by both women and men (Słowik J., 2017) – it is becoming increasingly important to take actions in order to utilize the natural potential of women on the management field (leadership).

### **Women participation in project management**

Traditional management focused on harmonizing simple and repeatable tasks, facing rapid technological changes, globalization growth and increasing competitiveness giving way to complex and unrepeatable management (Kisielnicki J., 2011), carried out in a turbulent environment, i.e. project management that is a foundation for changes, increased adaptability of the company enabling continued activities and development. The acceleration of change rate creating the need to design and implement next enterprises is the direct condition for intensive proliferation of project management. H. Kerzner (Kerzner H., 2005) states that the organizations of the 21st century will face a real revolution that will require deeper understanding of the project management matter and what outcomes resulting from „project approach” of the management will be possible to achieve considering the synergy effect. Without disputing the meaning, the development of methodologies/approaches and tools related to them will have for project management and evolution toward project based organization (incl: *Aigle*, *Agilean* and others), it is emphasized, that aiming at successful realization of the growing number of new projects, organizations will be forced to involve more and more people – project managers. Additionally, they will also be interested in gathering experience to be utilized in order to improve the effectiveness of project management, shortening their lead-time etc. It is not easy to precisely define the management perspectives, as claimed by Adrian Lammi (President of PMI Northeast Ohio), the future of project management may look in the following way (Kerzner H., 2005): „owing to the skills required from the project managers, project management of the 21<sup>st</sup> century will become a unique field of knowledge.(...) While scope, time, cost and quality will remain very important, they will be accompanied by other determinants of success: proper



human resource management and communication management. Project managers will be rewarded for their reasoning skills, wielding influence, inspiring and negotiating and in doing so, they will have to surpass the country and culture boundaries.” The above cited statement indicates that for the future of project management, the role of manager and requirement related to it will be particularly important, especially behavioral skills (wielding influence, communication, empathy, etc.)

What then, based on this perspective, is the interest and participation of women as project managers?

While women on project manager positions are still not an every-day reality, they do not evoke a feeling of astonishment as it was the case some decades prior. Already in 1995 A. Gale and S. Cartwright noted in their research (Henderson S. L. & Stackman W. R. & Koh Y. Ch., 2013) that women are not sufficiently represented as project managers, exactly as it was in case of women on higher managerial positions. They emphasized, however, that it applies to businesses that are traditionally „male,” e.g. construction. Also the research of G. M. Mulenburg, from early 2000 confirmed, that project management still remained a male dominated profession (Nauhauser Ch., 2007) despite a significant increase of “critical mass” of women entering the project organizations/environments. The maintained disproportion between men and women in project manager role is confirmed by the gender structure of PMI association (PMI, 2008), where in 2008 30% of the members were women and 70% men. The ratio differs slightly depending on business or region, e.g. in North America in 2008 women participation was at 42% and in 2011 (PMI, 2011) a drop to 36% was noted which shows the maintained masculinization in the project management area. Another research (Carter N.M. & Silva C., 2010) exploring the subject of female project managers shows that the expectations (assumptions) about increased women parity as project leaders have not come true. The chances to level the proportions between traditionally male managers and women have not either been utilized. On the contrary, some regression as reaction to uncertainty and ambivalence in today’s organizations is observed, which causes them to derive from familiar cultural beliefs/patterns in reaction to dynamic surrounding.

Another indication of maintained marginalization of women in project management is assigning female managers less ambitious, less complex and lower risk projects which often translates into less team members and adequately lower budgets for these projects (Henderson S. L. & Stackman W. R., 2010). A hard evidence here is maintaining the difference in compensation between men and women involved in project management as shown by data from PMI study (PMI, 2017) conducted in 2016. It involved 37 countries, in 36 of which the compensation of men is higher than that of women<sup>1</sup> (the lowest difference of about 1.5% noted in France). In Poland, with the average annual salary of project management employee at 159 013 PLN, the difference between compensation of men and women is 22.4%<sup>2</sup> (no data related exclusively to project managers available). Summarizing the above, it can be claimed, that despite the changes aiming at increased involvement of women in project management, their situation in this field is not different than the one of women in management position in general. Also here, the earlier identified barriers related to women participation in management are visible.

Coming back to the project management matter, i.e. to the process where the project manager who is planning and monitoring activities comprising a project, also allocates proper resources in order to achieve goal/goals as planned and meeting the defined budget. Project manager is a key factor here conditioning an effective project realization and in order to do that, he/she should fulfill the following roles (Stolarska A., 2016): coordinator, communication responsible, inspiring/motivating individual, change leader, negotiator, entrepreneur and possess

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<sup>1</sup> No data for Saudi Arabia provided.

<sup>2</sup> Calculated based on PMI data from 2017



appropriate competences. Research conducted on this scope allowed to indicate, that particularly important are the following (Urbańska-Musioł A., 2010):

- ability to communicate,
- ability to solve problems,
- ability to make decisions,
- leadership skills,
- ability to build/motivate team,
- negotiating skills,
- flexibility

According to T. Kopczyński (Kopczyński T., 2014) the modern project management should be viewed as a transition from the traditional management referencing to the approach based on predictability and classical planning to agile management where adaptability, creativity and speed of action focused on customer needs (external and internal) are accentuated. This results in changes to roles and competences of project manager. Especially, the social competences are of importance, more demanded are leaders with such attributes as: inspiring/motivating, building relations (including trust), positive reinforcement/energy awakening, encouraging to self-development, showing empathy etc. Thus, preferred is a management style with so called female features and values as dominating.

Due to its specifics, project management generates particular opportunities for women who want to „prove themselves” in management, i.e. fulfilling a managerial role (among others, considering a time-limited project life perspective, possibility to select the area of management resulting from the type/scope of project and difficulty scale related to it). This creates a chance to use the natural potential of women coming from the well-developed abilities to communicate, organize team work based on partnership, „innate” abilities to simultaneously manage several aspects/perspectives (multitasking), integrated thinking in the dynamically changing reality. Seeing through the prism of demands formulated for effective project management, a clear convergence appears between the features defined as female management style, i.e. those naturally displayed by women (even though, as emphasized in literature of the subject, it is not denied that this style can be adopted by men and that women can use so called male management style based mainly on competition, goal attainment and analytical thinking).

### **Methodology and research**

In the light of such a situation outline it has been judged as legitimate, within the poll study, to verify the situation related to the role and participation of women in project management on the background of their participation in organization management in Poland. Considering the inevitable need to increase the rate of their participation for the sake of management future (ensure proper representation) and quick rate of project management popularization, it has been attempted to identify conditions that are crucial for utilization of the potential related to women in the role of project management as well as conditions important to employ the potential in the future, i.e. for efficient and effective realization of the different projects and project portfolio management in the organization.

In order to obtain answers to the asked questions, quantitative study has been conducted<sup>3</sup> (as a poll), internet based survey has been utilized (the choice of the technique was mostly based on being able to include higher number of respondents as well as increased anonymity). The questionnaire included characteristics of the respondents and their subjective opinions about the woman’s role as project manager and conditions in this field. The authors applied a deliberate choice of research group, inviting to the study only women on project manager positions. Included in the study were 104 women from all over Poland (however, the number of answering the given questions is different). It should be considered that due to the small research sample the study does not meet the condition of representativeness.

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<sup>3</sup> The survey study was conducted on the cusp of 2017/2018 using <https://researchonline.pl/5409>





Participating in the survey were 71.15% of women in the age range 30 to 49, 23.08% of women in the age range 25 to 29 and 5.77% of women in the age range 50 to 65. As far as the education of the studied women is concerned, most of them had higher education (87.44%). Only 1.78% respondents had secondary education. The prevalent group included women with education in economy and humanistic science (33.04% and 32.08% respectively), technical education (23.9%). A small group of respondents indicated the field of biology, chemistry, psychology and tourism. Most of the respondents had a postgraduate/MBA education in the field of project management (45.3%) and certificates and completed training (23.08%) in project management, among others IPMA B, IPMA D, P3O, PMP, P3O, PRINCE 2F, PSM I. On the other hand, 22.22% of women did not indicate any special education in the field of program management. The most numerous group was comprised of respondents, who declared experience in project management 2 to 5 years long (49.05%), 19.61% of women declared experience of 6 to 9 years and 16.67% – 10 years and more. 14.71% women indicated their experience under 1 year. Most of the women on program management positions have been involved in business organizations in big enterprise<sup>4</sup> (61.86%). A significantly smaller group was comprised of women involved in average size enterprises (16.49%), small enterprises (11.34%) and micro enterprises (10.31%). Much less women were involved in public/social organizations. Taking into consideration this category, the respondents indicated mainly state administration (26.67%), local government organization (13.33%) and social organization (8.89%). The respondents represented mainly services (48.53%) and production (15.51%). Trade gave 8.75% of indications and transportation – 3.9% of indications. Among other businesses IT, telecommunication, educational sector, culture and administration were mentioned. The number of projects executed to date- as project manager, was distributed among the respondents as follows: a big number of women executed more than 10 projects (37.78%), then 33.33% of women executed 1 to 3 projects, 22.22% of women realized 4 to 6 projects and only 6.67% of women realized 7 to 10 projects. While the survey was being run, 26.97% of respondents were involved in 2 projects simultaneously and 22.47% were working on 1 project, whereas 19.1% of women were working on 3 projects, 15.73% of women were managing more than 4 projects. The average budget per one project accomplished by one respondent (where n=87) fluctuated in the range above 50 000 PLN (66.67%). 10.34% of women indicated the range of up to 10 000 PLN. Relatively big group was comprised of women who executed projects lasting in average for up to 1 year (54.55%) and projects lasting 2-3 years (40.94%). By far smallest group is comprised by women carrying out projects lasting longer than 3 years (4.51%). According the respondents' opinions, most of the organizations have no room for project portfolio management (46.51%). 53.49% of the respondents indicated that the organization manages project portfolio: in 46 cases it covers 10 projects, and in 11 organizations from 1 to 3 projects, in other 10 organizations it is 4 to 6 projects and in 5 organizations 7 to 10 projects are covered. Women participating in the study indicated, that they mainly execute project for organization's own needs (57.95%). On the other hand, 42.05% of women carried out projects for external customers. For a definite majority of respondents, project management was a result of their deliberate choice (64.71%), led by, among others, need for increased duties, willingness to prove oneself, proving that „it is possible” to complete with success and also the vocation and activity based on project management. Additionally, the deliberate choice of the respondents was related to the possibility to gain experience and knowledge in project management which allowed them to conduct projects in an unassisted way, growing in this field and taking responsibility for the project. The women participating in the survey underlined that project management is a profession requiring wide competences, offering numerous challenges

<sup>4</sup> In Poland, the characteristics of enterprises include: a micro enterprise (up to 10 employees), a small enterprise (10-50 employees), a medium enterprise (50-250 employees), a large enterprise (up to 250 employees).



on managerial level. Additionally, they accentuated, that their deliberate choice of project management was due to independency, feeling good working in uncertainty, full accountability for the tasks and full decisiveness in terms of investor selection, whereas 32.94% of women pointed out, that project management in their case was a pure coincidence caused by liquidation of their job and transfer to project manager position, proposal within the internal recruitment process, recognition of potential and opportunity to grow as project manager as well as an opportunity to prove themselves owing to skills in project and people.

Most of the surveyed women declared continued project management in the future, increasing the scope of realized projects by other fields/areas (29.65%) or concentration on the specifics in a defined project category (12.21%). Then, part of the respondents treated program management as an transient stage of their professional development (9.3%) and pursue of promotion to a traditional (managerial) management position (6.4%). 2.33% of women admitted that they wanted to cease, i.e. exit the project management area due to retirement and starting being a trainer on this subject, planning own business, low compensation and “not fitting” in the project management specialization.

The following were the particular motivators for the surveyed women (n=84) to start professional career:

- possibility of acting and self-realization (28.1%),
- financial independence (26.67%),
- fulfilling ambitions (16.19%),
- relative freedom of acting/decision making (15.71%),
- influencing people/relations (11.43%).

Among other factors the women indicated their self-awareness they were brought up with and possibility of continuous development.

Taking into account the determinants of the project manager position, the women (n=84) indicated, among others:

- possibility of acting and self-realization (30%),
- relative freedom of acting/decision making (24%),
- influencing people/relations (17%),
- fulfilling ambitions (14.5%).

While searching for answers about the conditions related to program management carried out by women, the respondents were asked the following question: *which of the management skills are most useful as assessed by female project manager?* The question was answered by 83 respondents (n=83) who out of the list of 18 skills indicated maximum 5. It is worth mentioning that all skills put on the list were taken into account which shows the complexity of project management and need for diversified spectrum of skills necessary to manage this matter. Most indications related to interpersonal skills (communication, solving conflicts, etc.) – 17.4%, another one appeared to be setting priorities of the realized tasks – 0.5%. However, not less important were typical skills related to decision making/planning, organizing, controlling. The least indicated were skills connected with cost management, time management and discipline which may confirm that need for such skills is relatively lower even when the project management function sets priority for cost, time, productivity and quality.

Taking into account the personal features that are particularly crucial for a project manager, (at n=83 and the possibility to select 6 answers as a maximum), the respondents indicated:

- communication skills, i.e. ability to make new contacts, openness etc., in other words, features deciding about the interpersonal skills (12.1%),
- qualifications to think in cause and effect manner, which on one hand means the ability to analyze and identify rationale and justification of choices, and on the other hand to design and anticipate the action conditions – 9.8%,



- ability to manage difficult unusual situations and adaptability to the dynamic changes of the conditions, flexibility – 8.4%.

In the next question the respondents expressed their opinion about determinants ensuring effectiveness (success) in project management (n=83).

The highest number of indications (23.6%) was related to the skill of integrating tasks within the team, coordinating them in the frame of holistic view of the problem being resolved. On the second place the experience in project management was identified (22.3%). Knowledge related to building relations with people, about their behaviors and attitudes was ranked as important (19.2%), and finally, the special knowledge in a given field related to the project was indicated (7%). The management style allowing participation of employees in finding solutions in relation to a given project is of great importance (17.4%). Within other factors it was pointed out that understanding customer needs and ensuring contacts with them during project execution pays an important role.

In order to identify the conditions impacting effectiveness, an attempt was made to obtain an answer to the following question: *what do the project managers strive to avoid?* The respondents' answers (n=83) indicate that they strive to avoid:

- domineeringness (31%),
- superficiality (22%),
- stiffness of applied procedures (19%),
- rush (12.5%).

At the same time, they do not concentrate on avoiding high-handedness in decision making while assigning tasks or on not taking risks. The above may attest that they may reach for „hard” management tools if it is required to attain goals.

If it comes to the barriers resulting from the immanent „female” features, the participants replying to the next question (n=72) admitted, that these are:

- lacking faith in oneself (20.7%),
- feeling uncertain about their knowledge (16.4%),
- lacking courage to formulate and express own thoughts, needs (16.4%).

It is worth noting that the same number of respondents (16.4%) no longer sees impact of these factors. Barriers that were not listed in the survey for selection and got brought up by the respondents are: expressing higher requirements toward women (they should have more detailed knowledge, they should not make mistakes, etc.), but at the same time, the management is burden with excessive emotionality.

It appears that in order to ensure effectiveness in project management, especially important for female project managers (n=72) are activities leading to overcoming stereotypes, including, among others:

- different standards of evaluation and compensation of men and women (24%),
- typical barriers, like glass ceiling, sticky floor etc., presenting the reluctance to women as managers (17.4 %),
- maintaining selection methods that respect male domination on project manager position (15.6%),

Other barriers, that respondents indicated as ones they need to overcome while managing projects are: giving them so called soft, sometimes low budget projects and relatively frequent appealing to the „hierarchical” instead of competency based criterion of project manager selection process.

Relating to the conditions that should be met in the future, the respondents (n=72), expressed the opinion, that in project management of the future, the special challenges are connected with:

- ability to remote team management – resulting from ITC technology advancement and home office popularization (20%),





- adjustability to the specifics of new generation, i.e. the generation functioning in an online environment (19.0 %),
- increasing complexity of the projects, forcing hybrid teams organizations (13.8%),
- increasing need to educate the shareholders (8.5%).

Thus, in order to meet these challenges and ensure effective project management, it seems necessary to develop/strengthen certain competences. Women who are project managers (n=80) have the following perception of the priorities focused on strengthening:

- ability of congeneric problem solving (14.7%),
- perfecting work in the team (11.3%),
- creativity release (10.2%),
- training ability of convincing and persuasion (8.7%),
- application of critical thinking (7.8%),
- widen active listening skills (6.4%).

The key task for project managers of the future of increasing needs for potential to manage enterprises being the reaction to impulses for change in the reality of ever increasing change rate, will be the optimization of work ability of the project teams in order to maintain their availability to undertake tasks/projects that are crucial for continued competitiveness of the companies. The respondents share a symptomatic conviction that not taking actions in this direction is unaffordable. Women (n=81), as project managers intend to implement these tasks as follows:

- keeping appropriate acceptance level for failures and by building ability to learn from mistakes (28.5%); consent to mistakes is inevitable in order to keep ability to act (not getting into frustration). At the same time the point is, that in time of turbulent changes it is important to be able to learn quickly new ways of acting that help to keep relatively lasting competitive advantage,
- taking actions in leading to increased involvement and creativity of the team members (20.2%), tightening the cooperation in the team (15.8%), but also to monitor development of the different team members (12.3%). In doing so, it is important to strive for balance between stiff procedures/implemented standards and freedom of acting (16,3%) and caring for maintaining work-life balance (6,0%).

## **Conclusions and proposals.**

In the light of the presented literature studies it is accentuated that the representation of women in managing social-economical organizations be increased as a determinant of their further growth and effectiveness enhancement as well as our civilization development.

However, the statistics, data contained in the reports reflecting the actual situation show the existence of clear disproportion between involvement of men and women in the management and identify inhibiting effect of numerous barriers (both of exogenous and endogenous nature).

Similar situation exists in the project management area. On one hand, project manager function is for women a unique opportunity to “prove oneself,” gain managerial experience. It also gives the possibility to use (in the context of requirements set forth for project management) the natural potential of women coming from the features and values preferred by them (including social competences). On the other hand, the practice constantly confirms the appearance of masculinization in this field and resulting tendency to marginalize women in project management.

The survey study carried out by the Authors concerning the situation of women in project manager function in Poland:

- seems to confirm, that women are properly prepared to professionally fulfill the function of project manager. The motivators determining them to undertake this role are



the possibility to act and self-realization as well as a relative freedom of acting. Most of them have deliberately chosen this function and intend to continue to work in it in the future (specializing in a certain type of projects or widening and diversifying their scope). At the same time, about 6% of them treat the current position as a stage in striving to attain a higher managerial position.

- Allows to consider the following features as particularly useful in project management: communication skills, ability to cause-and-effect thinking and adaptability. At the same time, they indicated that cost, time and quality management skills are here of lesser importance (which so far have been considered as key in project management).

- Respondents admit, that holding managerial positions they strive to restrain from domineeringness, stiff perception of procedures and exercising time pressure, i.e. factors that play relatively big role in the male project management style. However, at the same time they admit, that their project management was relatively highly influenced by: lack of faith/sense of uncertainty, lack of courage. They also note that in this area most of the stereotypes related to women in management/business can be found.

- The survey shows that the respondents have the awareness of the changes and challenges the project management is facing, including: increasing complexity of the projects and need for their congeneric resolution, perfecting of the team work and creativity release among people. They also see the importance of convincing and persuasion, critical thinking and active listening. They realize that the technical advancement will force the ability of remote management of the team, that it will be necessary to get used to the habit of generation „functioning online” and that more time will need to be devoted to contacts and education of the stakeholders.

- The survey participants confirmed that they realize the key role of the future project manager will be to maintain the organization’s ability to undertake certain enterprises/projects and optimization of the potential for the work of project teams (in the reality of the ever growing need for change). They will strive to implement this optimization by: developing fast learning skills (also on mistakes), acceptance of failures, crating conditions to release creativity of the team members by looking for balance between free acting and procedures/standards and also, on the individual level, offering the team members growth opportunities and allowing for life and work balance.

The conclusions resulting from the problem analysis and conducted survey study are the base to show direction for further research on the subject. Certainly, it would be necessary to widen the subject scope, i.e. include in the study male project managers, contractors/members of the project teams and present their opinions in relation to the placed questions. What needs to be further explored is the casus of relatively low participation of women on managerial positions and in project management, special attention and focus should be given to the alternative acting methods (i.e. legal solutions, for example, implementing quota versus actions focused on self-awareness of women). The issue of convergence of the current project management with the features and values resulting from behaviors and attitudes of women should be deeper analyzed. Also, the problem of initiating certain actions for optimizing project potential is still poorly researched, against the background of conditions for efficient human resource management clear recommendations for practitioners are necessary.

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