

## ANALYSIS OF PERCEPTION OF CERTAIN EMPLOYMENT ASPECTS, WORK CONDITIONS AND COMMITMENT AMONG CROATIAN MANAGERS<sup>1</sup>

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### ABSTRACT

Company performance depends to a great extent on managers who, in the usual understanding of their role, perform the functions of planning, organizing, staffing, leading and controlling. Different factors of economic and social character have an impact on all employees, and, by the same token, on managers. These issues should be permanently analyzed at the company level, which is primarily the task of human resource management. However, to outline the general profile of managers these attitudes should be examined at a higher level, which was the purpose of the present research. The main intention was to determine how Croatian managers perceive certain aspects of their own employment, work conditions and commitment, as well as to verify the significance of differences with regard to the chosen characteristics. The research was conducted on a sample of managers based in the four counties of Eastern Croatia. The collected data were analyzed by means of adequate statistical methods. The results enable the managers, regardless of their own answers to particular questions, to gain a clear insight into their position in the business world, and to use their knowledge, experience and skills more effectively in fulfilling their tasks.

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**Keywords:** Managers' perception, economic and social factors, profile of managers, human resource management, statistical methods

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

With the introduction of different kinds of ownership and transition to market economy, numerous issues arose in the early 1990s in Croatian economic theory and practice, with particular emphasis on management. Over the past two decades management has been developing in the Republic of Croatia in rather peculiar circumstances. The war, privatization, the inherited inefficiency of the economic system, loss of markets and frequent interference of political structures into economic processes are just a few of the problems characteristic of that period. The deep crisis that the world economy is currently going through has forced Croatian managers to face new challenges.

Although a range of factors can exert an impact on any enterprise, the greatest responsibility for its functioning lies definitely with its managers. It can therefore be concluded that overall company performance depends crucially on their expertise and competences. Especially important is the manager's capability to predict and solve the problems and to set the company on the right course, seizing the opportunities at the right time, and noticing the threats within the enterprise and in its environment at an early stage.

Planning, organizing, staffing, leading and controlling are the basic management functions. In keeping with this concept of management, the most important activities would be the following: planning of goals and tasks, defining the organizational structure required to achieve those goals, choosing the right personnel, leading people and processes, and control of task fulfilment. What comes to the foreground in performing these functions are the manager's characteristics. As any person, a manager is defined by a specific combination of personal, i.e. emotional and psychological, as well as physical characteristics. They are formed under the influence of several factors. The two most important ones are hereditary and social aspects. A good manager will have at least some of these desirable qualities: creativity, intelligence, persistence, diligence, energy and drive, boldness, enthusiasm, optimism, initiative, firm character, honesty, openness, empathy, being well-balanced, objectiveness, confidence and ambition. The knowledge and skills required for a managerial job are acquired through formal and informal education as well as through actual work in practice. A manager's quality is reflected in the performance of the company, i.e. the organization he/she manages. However, performance indicators are not the only measure of that manager's success. When evaluating a manager's performance, there are other things that should also be taken into account, such as

the atmosphere created by this manager, how satisfied his/her subordinates are, and the impact of his/her decisions on the natural environment.

It has been pointed out above that managers are affected by different social factors, many of which are economic in character. Determining such factors, eliminating the negative and emphasizing the positive effects of managers' activities will certainly enhance their efficiency and effectiveness. Considering the importance of these issues, such analyses should be permanently conducted in each enterprise, i.e. organization, which is primarily the task of the human resource management function. The activities performed by this function are, in the widest sense, planning personnel needs, recruiting people, giving them appropriate assignment, leading and motivating employees, protection and promotion. However, drawing a general manager profile goes beyond the human resource management function and requires a comprehensive insight into their attitudes regarding different economic and social issues at a higher level. This was actually the aim of this research. Through attitude analysis we intended to establish how Croatian managers perceive certain aspects of their employment, work conditions and own commitment, and to verify whether there are any statistically significant differences with reference to the chosen characteristics in this context.

The results of the research enable managers to get a clearer picture of their position in the business world once they consider how they have graded particular questions. Furthermore, the results indicate the factors which cause managers to feel dissatisfied, and which thus have an impact on their commitment to work. Finally, this type of analysis can help managers to more effectively direct their competences, skills and experience at achieving the set tasks.

## 2. PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Manager perceptions on various aspects of work and life have already been the subject of numerous, differently designed, studies, some of which will be briefly presented below.

Wu and Minor (1997) were evaluated similarities and differences between female managers of different nationalities (Taiwan, Japan, and the United States). They concluded that American, Japanese, and Taiwanese female managers had significantly different perceptions concerning roles, personal traits, lifestyles, and leadership behaviour. According to their research, American female managers tended to be more independent, more aggressive, more social, and more practical. Contrary

to this, Japanese female managers tended to be more dependent, less aggressive and more work-oriented, and Taiwanese female managers tended to be more conservative, with a traditional family and gender role orientation. Wu and Minor also found that while there were differences in the relative importance of work as compared to other roles (such as their role in the family), none of the three groups felt that their work role was the most important.

In his research paper, Maniam (2007) provides some knowledge on how managers as adult learners view their career success as a subjective element in the form of intrinsic learning outcome.

Lyness and Judiesch (2008), using self ratings, peer ratings, and supervisor ratings of 9627 managers in 33 countries, examined within-source and multisource relationships with multilevel analyses. They generally found that managers who were rated higher in work–life balance were rated higher in career advancement potential than were managers who were rated lower in work–life balance.

Hyvönen, Feldt, Salmela-Aro, Kinnunen, and Mäkikangas (2009) in their study approached young managers' occupational well-being through their workrelated goal pursuit. The main aim of their research was to identify content categories of personal work goals and investigate their associations with background factors, goal appraisals, burnout, and work engagement. Their study has shown that the contents of young managers' work-related goals can contribute to the understanding of individual differences in occupational well-being.

The goal of the research by Mihelčić and Karlovčan (2008) was to draw a profile of a typical Croatian manager and then to compare the obtained results by manager segments in terms of their area of work, gender, age, education level, etc. The research was conducted in two sections by means of on-line anonymous questionnaires. The first section was based on responses by 214 managers, encompassing their work dimension (the hours worked, income, how satisfied they were with their career development and job itself, how much professional training they get and how they cope with different managerial situations). The obtained responses were compared along the following criteria: a manager's position, total years of service, number of subordinates, gender, age, marital status and level of education. The second section of the research, conducted on a sample of 455 respondents, was focused on private life of Croatian managers (satisfaction with their private life, leisure time, family relationships, housing and their own car). This section also

included questions on the ways managers run their private finances. Although quite comprehensive, this research was almost exclusively limited to frequency analysis.

Dukić (2009) in her paper explored the differences in attitudes between Croatian managers and non-managing employees regarding different aspects of material and non-material character. With this purpose, a sample was gathered of 360 respondents from the area of Osijek-Baranja County. The research has shown that different aspects of employment and work-related issues received higher average grades from managers than from other employees. The only exception was the assessment of the amount of own leisure time. Statistical significance of differences was confirmed for 13 research variables. Using factor analysis three factors were determined: factor of job satisfaction, factor of satisfaction with income and wealth, and factor of satisfaction with own leisure time.

### 3. Methods and sample description

Our research conducted by means of a written survey aimed to investigate how certain aspects of employment, work conditions and own commitment were perceived by managers. There were 290 participants in the survey, all located in the four counties of Eastern Croatia. The aim of the research and the instructions how to fill in the questionnaire were given to each respondent in a face-to-face conversation. The gathered data were first entered into a *Microsoft Excel* table, and then processed by means of statistical packages *SPSS* and *Statistica*.

The collected data were analyzed by means of adequate statistical methods. Descriptive statistics methods were used in order to describe the sample and the defined variables. From the standpoint of inferential statistics, some groups as determined for the analysis purposes were not large enough. Since preliminary tests of the hypothesis on normal distribution of the sample mostly failed to confirm this assumption, it was necessary to examine the statistical significance of differences by means of two non-parametric tests, the Kruskal-Wallis and the Mann-Whitney test. In our analysis, the differences considered to be statistically significant are those that were confirmed at the level  $p < 0.05$ .

Among 290 managers included in the survey there were 168 men (57.93%) and 122 women (42.07%). Their average age was 40.94 years, with standard deviation of 9.92 years. The youngest manager in the sample was 21, and the oldest was 65 years of age, whereas the median value was 41 years. The respondents were divided

into three age groups for the analysis purposes. Table 1 shows the distribution of respondents by gender and age group.

**Table 1.** Distribution of respondents by gender and age group

Age group (year)	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
21-35	58 (20.00%)	38 (13.10%)	96 (33.10%)
36-50	71 (24.48%)	72 (24.83%)	143 (49.31%)
51-65	39 (13.45%)	12 (4.14%)	51 (17.59%)
Total	168 (57.93%)	122 (42.07%)	290 (100.00%)

Managers between 36 and 50 years of age accounted for the largest portion of the sample. In this group the number of male and female managers was about the same. Female managers had the weakest representation in the oldest group.

**Table 2.** Distribution of respondents by gender and education level

Education level	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Secondary school	68 (23.45%)	54 (18.62%)	122 (42.07%)
Two-year college	43 (14.83%)	23 (7.93%)	66 (22.76%)
University degree	57 (19.66%)	45 (15.52%)	102 (35.17%)
Total	168 (57.93%)	122 (42.07%)	290 (100.00%)

The largest number of managers had a secondary education. Female managers with two-year college education were underrepresented in the sample, whereas their share in the first and third education group was about equal to that of male respondents.

**Table 3.** Distribution of respondents by gender and management level

Management level	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Lower management	87 (30.00%)	61 (21.03%)	148 (51.03%)
Middle management	56 (19.31%)	48 (16.55%)	104 (35.86%)
Top management	25 (8.62%)	13 (4.48%)	38 (13.10%)
Total	168 (57.93%)	122 (42.07%)	290 (100.00%)

The largest number of respondents in our sample belonged to the ranks of lower management, and the smallest number belonged to top management. When comparing men and women, the smallest proportion of women can be found in top management.

**Table 4.** Distribution of respondents by education and management level

Management level	Education level			Total
	Secondary school	Two-year college	University degree	
Lower management	85 (29.31%)	36 (12.41%)	27 (9.31%)	148 (51.03%)
Middle management	30 (10.34%)	24 (8.28%)	50 (17.24%)	104 (35.86%)
Top management	7 (2.41%)	6 (2.07%)	25 (8.62%)	38 (13.10%)
Total	122 (42.07%)	66 (22.76%)	102 (35.17%)	290 (100.00%)

Respondents with secondary education were the majority in lower management, while they had the lowest proportion in top management. The largest number of respondents with two-year college education also belonged to lower management, but they participated more significantly in middle management, if we take account of their proportion in the sample. In top management, as well as in middle management the greatest number of managers had a university education.



#### 4. ANALYSIS RESULTS

In order to determine the ways Croatian managers perceive certain aspects of their employment, work conditions and own commitment, and to check the statistical significance of differences regarding the chosen features, there were 14 variables defined for the research:

- Assessment of earned income (V1);
- Assessment of current job (V2);
- Assessment of job security (V3);
- Assessment of working conditions (V4);
- Assessment of work space quality (V5);
- Assessment of technical equipment of working space (V6);
- Assessment of interpersonal relationships at work (V7);
- Assessment of relationship with superiors, if any (V8);
- Assessment of relationship with subordinates (V9);
- Assessment of professional training possibilities (V10);
- Assessment of encouragement to continue formal education in the company or institution where managers are employed (V11);
- Assessment of possibilities for advancement at work (V12);
- Assessment of own commitment at work (V13);
- Assessment of the amount of own leisure time (V14).

The attitudes of the respondent were measured on the Likert scale comprising 5 grades, ranging from 1 as the lowest to 5 as the highest grade.

Managers assessed with the largest average grade their own commitment to work (V13). In addition, the average grade of 4 or larger was given by respondents to the following variables: assessment of relationship with subordinates (V9), assessment of technical facilities in work space (V6), and assessment of the current job (V2). The lowest grade was given to the encouragement to continue formal education that they receive in the company or institution where they are employed (V11). A relatively low average grade was further calculated for the variables defined as assessment of the available leisure time (V14) and assessment of work advancement possibilities (V12).



**Table 5.** Basic descriptive statistics

Variable	Descriptive statistics					
	Mean	Median	Interquartile range	Standard deviation	Variation coefficient	Skewness
V1	3.552	4.000	1.000	0.876	24.661	-0.361
V2	4.000	4.000	1.000	0.856	21.412	-0.799
V3	3.759	4.000	2.000	0.986	26.240	-0.503
V4	3.920	4.000	2.000	0.900	22.951	-0.735
V5	3.948	4.000	2.000	1.006	25.468	-0.780
V6	4.052	4.000	1.000	0.916	22.595	-0.811
V7	3.872	4.000	2.000	0.869	22.443	-0.419
V8	3.891	4.000	2.000	0.936	24.042	-0.759
V9	4.098	4.000	1.000	0.675	16.461	-0.466
V10	3.404	4.000	1.000	1.073	31.512	-0.451
V11	2.945	3.000	2.000	1.221	41.438	0.056
V12	3.161	3.000	2.000	1.171	37.038	-0.184
V13	4.352	4.000	1.000	0.655	15.060	-0.812
V14	3.131	3.000	2.000	1.165	37.209	-0.086

For most of the variables, the median had the value 4. It was only for the three variables assessed with lowest average grades that the median value was 3. On the basis of the calculated variation coefficients it can be concluded that the dispersion in most of the analyzed distributions is quite high. The lowest dispersion of data is observed in the variable defined as the estimate of own work commitment (V13). According to skewness, it is only for variable V11 that distribution is positively skewed.

**Table 6.** Basic descriptive statistics and results of the Mann-Whitney test

Variable	Gender				Mann-Whitney test	
	Male		Female		Z	p
	Mean	Median	Mean	Median		
V1	3.530	4.000	3.582	4.000	-0.625	0.532
V2	3.982	4.000	4.025	4.000	-0.523	0.601
V3	3.774	4.000	3.738	4.000	-0.312	0.755
V4	3.862	4.000	4.000	4.000	-1.432	0.152
V5	3.875	4.000	4.049	4.000	-1.365	0.172
V6	4.065	4.000	4.033	4.000	-0.113	0.910
V7	3.845	4.000	3.910	4.000	-0.660	0.509
V8	3.838	4.000	3.957	4.000	-0.848	0.397
V9	4.126	4.000	4.059	4.000	-0.727	0.467
V10	3.373	3.000	3.446	4.000	-0.933	0.351
V11	2.913	3.000	2.991	3.000	-0.565	0.572
V12	3.145	3.000	3.183	3.000	-0.213	0.832
V13	4.339	4.000	4.369	4.000	-0.664	0.507
V14	3.030	3.000	3.270	3.000	-1.810	0.070

In most cases higher average grades were calculated for female managers. However, according to the Mann-Whitney test, at the level  $p < 0.05$  no differences in attitudes between male and female managers were statistically significant.

**Table 7.** Basic descriptive statistics and results of the Kruskal-Wallis test

Variable	Age group (year)						Kruskal-Wallis test	
	21-35		36-50		51-65		H	p
	Mean	Median	Mean	Median	Mean	Median		
V1	3.583	4.000	3.615	4.000	3.314	3.000	5.977	0.050
V2	4.073	4.000	4.021	4.000	3.804	4.000	3.053	0.217
V3	3.833	4.000	3.818	4.000	3.451	3.000	7.105	0.029
V4	4.042	4.000	3.915	4.000	3.706	4.000	6.570	0.037
V5	4.073	4.000	3.944	4.000	3.725	4.000	4.571	0.102
V6	4.240	5.000	3.993	4.000	3.863	4.000	10.391	0.006
V7	4.073	4.000	3.790	4.000	3.725	4.000	8.355	0.015
V8	4.024	4.000	3.915	4.000	3.568	4.000	5.545	0.063
V9	4.106	4.000	4.114	4.000	4.039	4.000	0.724	0.696

V10	3.579	4.000	3.333	3.000	3.275	3.000	4.213	0.122
V11	2.957	3.000	3.000	3.000	2.771	3.000	1.237	0.539
V12	3.379	3.000	3.100	3.000	2.922	3.000	5.889	0.053
V13	4.385	4.000	4.357	4.000	4.275	4.000	1.226	0.542
V14	3.219	3.000	3.134	3.000	2.961	3.000	1.515	0.469

The results of the Kruskal-Wallis test indicate that there is at least one age group which differs significantly from others in terms of perceptions regarding job security (V3), working conditions (V4), technical equipment of working space (V6), and interpersonal relationship at work (V7). In all these cases, the lowest average grades were given by respondents from the oldest age group. In order to establish between which groups there are statistically significant differences in the above stated grades, it was necessary to conduct the Mann-Whitney test for these cases.

**Table 8.** Results of the Mann-Whitney test

Variable	Mann-Whitney test	Compared age groups (year)		
		21-35	21-35	36-50
		36-50	51-65	51-65
V3	Z	-0.164	-2.197	-2.654
	p	0.869	0.028	0.008
V4	Z	-1.505	-2.504	-1.500
	p	0.132	0.012	0.134
V6	Z	-2.742	-2.692	-0.943
	p	0.006	0.007	0.346
V7	Z	-2.534	-2.331	-0.675
	p	0.011	0.020	0.500

According to the Mann-Whitney test, managers from the youngest and the middle age group perceive differently technical equipment of working space (V6) and interpersonal relationship at work (V7). Furthermore, the results show that all the differences between managers from the youngest and the oldest age group are statistically significant. Managers belonging to the middle and the oldest age groups had different perceptions regarding job security (V3).

**Table 9.** Basic descriptive statistics and results of the Kruskal-Wallis test

Variable	Education level						Kruskal-Wallis test	
	Secondary school		Two-year college		University degree		H	p
	Mean	Median	Mean	Median	Mean	Median		
V1	3.492	4.000	3.621	4.000	3.578	4.000	1.209	0.546
V2	3.877	4.000	4.045	4.000	4.118	4.000	5.292	0.071
V3	3.574	4.000	3.848	4.000	3.922	4.000	7.258	0.027
V4	3.876	4.000	3.924	4.000	3.971	4.000	0.536	0.765
V5	4.057	4.000	3.924	4.000	3.833	4.000	3.686	0.158
V6	4.025	4.000	4.121	4.000	4.039	4.000	0.586	0.746
V7	3.926	4.000	3.833	4.000	3.833	4.000	1.247	0.536
V8	3.883	4.000	3.881	4.000	3.906	4.000	0.311	0.856
V9	4.178	4.000	3.969	4.000	4.088	4.000	5.083	0.079
V10	3.342	3.500	3.394	3.500	3.485	4.000	0.803	0.669
V11	2.982	3.000	2.952	3.000	2.900	3.000	0.233	0.890
V12	3.271	3.000	3.015	3.000	3.127	3.000	1.822	0.402
V13	4.410	4.000	4.318	4.000	4.304	4.000	1.735	0.420
V14	3.033	3.000	3.106	3.000	3.267	3.000	2.284	0.319

The results of the Kruskal-Wallis test showed that there is at least one education level group that differs significantly from others in terms of perceptions regarding job security (V3). According to the Mann-Whitney test, managers with secondary school and managers with university degree had different perceptions regarding job security ( $Z = -2.523$ ,  $p = 0.011$ ). Differences between the other compared education level groups had not been statistically significant.

**Table 10.** Basic descriptive statistics and results of the Kruskal-Wallis test

Variable	Management level						Kruskal-Wallis test	
	Lower management		Middle management		Top management		H	p
	Mean	Median	Mean	Median	Mean	Median		
V1	3.399	3.000	3.673	4.000	3.816	4.000	9.861	0.007
V2	3.899	4.000	3.990	4.000	4.421	5.000	14.564	0.001
V3	3.615	4.000	3.798	4.000	4.211	4.000	12.053	0.002
V4	3.757	4.000	4.010	4.000	4.316	4.000	14.260	0.001
V5	3.932	4.000	3.913	4.000	4.105	4.000	0.741	0.690
V6	3.986	4.000	4.077	4.000	4.237	4.000	1.667	0.434
V7	3.824	4.000	3.875	4.000	4.053	4.000	1.821	0.402
V8	3.794	4.000	3.902	4.000	4.267	5.000	8.459	0.015
V9	4.049	4.000	4.106	4.000	4.263	4.000	3.015	0.221
V10	3.274	3.000	3.452	4.000	3.784	4.000	6.332	0.042
V11	2.878	3.000	3.010	3.000	3.029	3.000	1.038	0.595
V12	2.986	3.000	3.272	3.000	3.526	4.000	9.150	0.010
V13	4.284	4.000	4.327	4.000	4.684	5.000	11.763	0.003
V14	3.074	3.000	3.231	3.000	3.081	3.000	0.944	0.624

Among the analyzed characteristics, management level was the one that mostly discriminated managers in terms of variables defined in this research. According to the Kruskal-Wallis test, there is at least one group of managers that was, regarding the management level they belong to, significantly different from the others when assessing their earned income (V1), current job (V2), job security (V3), working conditions (V4), relationship with superiors, if any (V8), professional training possibilities (V10), possibilities for advancement at work (V12), and own work commitment (V13). In all these cases the highest average grades were calculated on the basis of top managers' responses. On average, the lowest grades were given by respondents who belonged to lower management.

**Table 11.** Results of the Mann-Whitney test

Variable	Mann-Whitney test	Compared management level groups		
		Lower management	Lower management	Middle management
		Middle management	Top management	Top management
V1	Z	-2.249	-2.711	-1.206
	p	0.025	0.007	0.228
V2	Z	-0.770	-3.701	-3.262
	p	0.441	0.000	0.001
V3	Z	-1.488	-3.353	-2.436
	p	0.137	0.001	0.015
V4	Z	-2.430	-3.390	-1.847
	p	0.015	0.001	0.065
V8	Z	-0.639	-2.700	-2.690
	p	0.523	0.007	0.007
V10	Z	-1.156	-2.425	-1.685
	p	0.248	0.015	0.092
V12	Z	-2.027	-2.575	-1.682
	p	0.043	0.010	0.092
V13	Z	-0.188	-3.251	-3.198
	p	0.851	0.001	0.001

The results of the Mann-Whitney test showed that lower and top managers differ in all the analyzed cases. Statistical significance was confirmed for differences between lower and middle managers regarding variables defined as assessment of earned income (V1), assessment of working conditions (V4), and assessment of work advancement possibilities (V12). Middle and top managers were different significantly in their perceptions of current job (V2), job security (V3), relationship with superiors, if any (V8), and own work commitment (V13).

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

This paper has presented the results of the research whose main aim was to establish the ways that Croatian managers perceive certain aspects of their employment, work conditions and own commitment. In addition, within the statistical analysis, and using the Mann-Whitney test and the Kruskal-Wallis test, we examined the significance of differences in managerial attitudes regarding their gender, membership in a defined age group, level of education and management level. The

research was conducted on a sample consisting of respondents located in the four counties in Eastern Croatia. Male respondents accounted for the larger portion of the sample. The largest proportion of managers who participated in the survey belonged to the middle age group. Managers with secondary school education and employed in lower management accounted for the largest share in the sample.

Managers evaluated with higher average grades their own work commitment, relationship with subordinates, technical equipment of working space and satisfaction with the current job, whereas the lowest grades were given to the encouragement to continue formal education, available leisure time and work advancement possibilities. Within the analysis, it was established that there were no questions where managers' assessments would show statistically significant differences in terms of their gender. Significant differences in managers' perceptions were confirmed regarding certain age groups for the following cases: assessment of job security, assessment of working conditions, assessment of technical equipment of working space, and assessment of interpersonal relations at work. In case of education level, managers with secondary school and managers with university degree had different perceptions regarding job security. Managers were mostly discriminated in terms of the management level that they belonged to. For this feature, statistically significant differences were confirmed for 8 analyzed variables. Earned income, current job, employment security, working conditions, relationship with superiors, professional training possibilities, work advancement possibilities, and own work commitment were given highest grades by top managers, whereas these features received lowest grades by respondents who belonged to lower management.

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