SELECTED ASPECTS OF MANAGING INTERPERSONAL RISK FACTORS IN HEALTHCARE PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

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Purpose: The aim of this article is to identify current trends in employee well-being in health projects in the context of interpersonal risk factors in projects, such as conflict, lack of trust, stress and burnout, and misunderstanding of roles. Dysfunctions in the implementation of project objectives, number and type of errors made.

Design/methodology/approach: The research was conducted using in-depth structured interviews with the help of an interview questionnaire. Thirteen people working on EU-co-financed health projects in the Pomeranian Province took part in the study.

Findings: The results of the study made it possible to identify trends related to project risk and employee well-being, as well as to propose solutions (tools) to help managers manage the project team and the risks associated with it.

Research limitations/implications: The research was conducted on a group consisting of employees of health project teams. Therefore, the results of the research refer exclusively to project teams working on health projects.

Practical implications: The proposed solutions – measures and tools – are preventive in nature, but also address interpersonal risks, both in the context of managing health project teams and the beneficiaries of these projects.

Social implications: The research conducted allows us to formulate recommendations that should be taken into account by health project managers.

Originality/value: Based on literature and conducted research, the authors identified trends related to risk in projects and indicated principles and tools that mitigate risk while improving employee well-being in project implementation.

Keywords: risk management, project, interpersonal risk, employee well-being.

Category of the paper: Research paper.

1. Introduction

Project teams operating in dynamic and demanding work environments are exposed to a number of psychosocial dysfunctions that directly affect the well-being of their members. High levels of stress, conflicts, and lack of trust can increase the risk of errors and reduce the effectiveness of project teams. Implementing projects in a turbulent and changing environment requires not only a technical and process-oriented approach, but also attention to the well-being of employees. Identifying trends in employee well-being is primarily aimed at minimizing project risk.

The research process began with a review of the literature on the subject. With reference to the two most important methodologies in the field of project management, a project is a temporary endeavor undertaken to create a unique product, service or result. In other words, it is a time-limited activity aimed at generating something new and unique (PMBOK Edycja 7, 2021). According to the Prince2 methodology, a project is a temporary organization established to deliver one or more business products according to an agreed business case (PRINCE2®, 2014). If a project involves more than one project and these projects are interconnected, such a structure is called a program. PRINCE2 introduces the assumption that the project is implemented in a customer-supplier environment. The customer is the source of project funding and expects a specific outcome from the project. In other words, a project is an organized and timed sequence of events—with a defined beginning and end—that aims to achieve a predetermined, precisely defined result, addressed to an identified group of stakeholders, and that requires significant and limited financial, material, and human resources (Puto, 2022).

Project management is the planning, delegation, monitoring, and control of all aspects of a project, and the motivation of those involved in the project, to achieve the project's objectives within the expected time, cost, quality, scope, benefits, and risk targets (PRINCE2®, 2017) or, more simply, project management is the application of knowledge, skills, tools, and techniques to project activities to meet project requirements. Project management refers to the management of project work to achieve intended results. Project teams can achieve results using a wide range of approaches (PMBOK, Edycja 7, 2021).

In the world and national literature, a number of attempts to define risk have been presented (Renn, 1992; Beck, 1999-2004; Bradbury, 1989; Choong, Brown, 2001; Hofman, 2017; Trocki, Grucza, Ogonek, 2009; Trembaczowski, 2016; Mesjasz, 2018). The starting point for understanding the essence and significance of risk in project management should be the general concept of risk society (Beck, 2004), where risk, and risk society in a synthetic sense, is a product of economic and social development. Risk is often treated as a social construction (Douglas, Wildawsky, 1982).

Project risk is an uncertain event or condition that, if it occurs, has a positive or negative impact on one or more project objectives, such as scope, schedule, cost, and quality (PMBOK 2013). Project risk is defined as the probability that certain events will occur that may adversely affect the achievement of one or more project objectives (PRINCE2®, 2017). In turn, according to the ISO 31000:2018 standard, risk is the effect of uncertainty in relation to objectives, which focuses on the effects of incomplete knowledge of events or circumstances on the organization's decision-making. This requires adapting risk management to the organization's needs and objectives, in all areas of the organization (https://www.iso.org/iso-31000-risk-management.html).

Project risk, in general, refers to the occurrence of circumstances that, to varying degrees, influence the discrepancy between the level of achievement and the results assumed in the project plan, referred to as project risk (Małkus, Wawak, 2022). One of the risk allocation criteria is the location of the risk cause, distinguishing internal (endogenous) risk related to the experience of the organization and its members, the size of the project, or the ability to cooperate with each other and with clients, and external (exogenous) risk related to specific phenomena and events that may hinder the successful implementation of the project (Mingus, 2002).

Project risk management is one of the most important areas for ensuring the effective achievement of project objectives. It is typically applied to the "hard aspects" of a project, such as time, cost, and quality. Project risk management with respect to the human dimension is much less emphasized in theory and practice (Betta, 2014). This identified research gap formed the basis for the research undertaken in this paper. The impact of employee well-being, shaped by interpersonal risks occurring in a project, appears to have an impact on project implementation and effectiveness.

Project risk management involves identifying project threats and determining actions to eliminate detected threats or minimize their impact on the project (Zaskórski et al., 2013).

The risk management process is sequential in nature and should be implemented continuously. In the literature, this process is divided into four stages, including context setting, risk assessment, risk response planning, and risk monitoring (ISO 31000.2018, 2.10, The Standard for Risk Management 2019) or five stages, i.e. (Pritchard, 2002; PMBOK®, 2013; Wirkus et al., 2014): risk identification, qualitative risk analysis, quantitative risk analysis, risk control, and risk inspection. In the most general sense, risk management includes: risk identification, risk and impact assessment, and risk management methods (Mesjasz, 2018).

Interpersonal risk in a team is a potential threat or danger arising from the relationships between team members, which can lead to conflicts, misunderstandings, reduced work efficiency, and a worsening of the workplace atmosphere. Such risk can stem from various factors, such as differences in communication styles, goal misalignment, lack of trust, or inability to resolve conflicts. Managing interpersonal risk is crucial to maintaining a healthy

and productive team atmosphere, which translates into better results and job satisfaction (Nowak, Wiśniewski, 2020).

Interpersonal risk in a project and well-being is a potential threat arising from the relationships between project team members, which can negatively impact the atmosphere, work efficiency, and overall well-being of participants (Kowalski, 2017). In the context of projects, this risk includes conflicts, misunderstandings, lack of trust, and communication difficulties, which can lead to stress, burnout, and decreased job satisfaction (Smith, Brown, 2019).

There are many theoretical and empirical works on conflict management in the literature, including those that emphasize its role as one of the success factors in project management (Kisielnicki, 2011; Pocztowski, 2007). Conflict is a social situation in which the conflicting interests, attitudes, and values of at least two individuals and/or groups operating within one organization come into contact, resulting in specific behaviors (Rummel-Syska, 1990; Dana, 2004; Kisielnicki, 2011; Pocztowski, 2007). The literature offers various classifications of conflicts that arise during project implementation, including team conflicts. Based on the entities involved in project management, two types of conflicts can be distinguished: intraorganizational and extra organizational. Considering the project lifecycle, the following conflicts can be distinguished that may arise within a project team (Kozina, 2017). Determined by the goals of the action, occurring within the context of tasks and functions, concerning human resources, related to the use of material resources, resulting from the grouping of organizational elements, arising within functional dependencies, manifesting within hierarchical dependencies, resulting from decision-making authority, and driven by the formalization of actions.

Trust in a project is the belief that entity A, in a specific situation, agrees to dependence on entity B (person, object, organization), with a sense of relative security, despite the possibility of negative consequences (Grudzewski et al., 2009). A three-level division of trust between organizations based on its origins includes contractual trust, competency-based trust, and trust based on goodwill (Tubielewicz, 2021). The development of the IPMA Individual Competence Baseline (ICB4) (version 4.0) placed significant emphasis on understanding roles within the project. According to the PMBOK 7 and PRINCE2 recommendations, appropriate communication and clear role assignments are crucial in project risk management. Effective methods include:

- Communication plan – defines the channels, frequency, and scope of information exchange, which reduces misunderstandings.
- Escalation procedures – enable quick and constructive resolution of disputes.
- Regular status meetings – support open information exchange and enable early response to tensions within the team.
- Facilitation and mediation – used in difficult conflict situations when an impartial mediator is needed.

This article qualitatively analyzes the responses of project employees, identifying four main categories of problems: conflict, lack of trust, stress and burnout, and role misunderstanding. Each of these factors is analyzed in terms of their occurrence and impact on employee well-being. Contemporary project teams operate under conditions of high time pressure, task variability, and often staff instability. These phenomena contribute to the emergence of various tensions and psychosocial difficulties. In research on the functioning of project teams, it is particularly important to examine the factors influencing employee well-being and to identify the forms of dysfunction that disrupt it.

2. Research method

In order to achieve the set objectives, it was decided to conduct a survey among employees of health project teams who implemented EU projects in the Pomeranian Province as the local government of the Pomeranian Province in the 2014-2020 EU financial perspective. The selection of project teams (research group) was deliberate. The research group included people who implemented projects in the field of health. It was important that the project was not only subject to project risk. Therefore, it was decided to select projects in the field of health that carry additional risks. Firstly, they are implemented in the area of health, which is a sensitive category. Secondly, they require the trust of project participants in the staff serving them in the project. It was also important that the projects were completed and settled, as various risks may arise at different stages of project implementation, hence the use of projects that have been completed. An additional criterion was the use of projects co-financed by the European Union. In addition to the methodology and tools used in each project, projects co-financed by the EU are subject to rules that are a kind of commitment in terms of, among other things, information and promotion activities, or eligibility criteria for expenditure, and the implementation of health policy towards the European Union. Furthermore, attention was focused on local government units, whose management of public funds is regulated by relevant legislative documents. Taking into account the above criteria, 15 employees were identified who worked on the following health projects between 2020 and 2014:

1. *Pomeranian medical professionals – safe at work, safe for patients*, budget PLN 20,667,488.93. The project was implemented between 1 February 2021 and 31 December 2021. The aim of the project was to reduce risk factors in the work environment resulting from contact with patients infected or potentially infected with the SARS-CoV-2 virus by providing employees of, among others, healthcare entities and state emergency medical services with the equipment and supplies most essential for effectively combating the COVID-19 epidemic. The local government of the Pomeranian Province concluded agreements with 30 healthcare entities.

2. *A better future. Counteracting mental disorders in children and young people*, which was implemented between 1 May 2021 and 28 December 2023, with a budget of PLN 5,665,531.40. The aim of the project was to prevent and reduce the negative effects of COVID-19 by increasing access to social and health services in the field of mental health for the inhabitants of the Pomeranian Province, in particular children and young people and their families. The project supported the development of the deinstitutionalisation of social and health services for people with mental disorders. Support was provided to a group of 1,856 residents affected by the direct and indirect effects of the pandemic in the area of mental health.

3. *Pomorskie Wspiera (Pomerania Supports)* – implemented from 1 January 2021 to 31 October 2023, with a project budget of PLN 8,603,317.69. The aim of the project was to support 3,210 residents of the Pomeranian Province affected by COVID-19, at risk of poverty or social exclusion, and their families. The activities planned in the project were aimed at supporting people in difficult socio-economic situations by providing them with individualised and deinstitutionalised services in the form of psychological counselling, care services provided by volunteers, health services and preventive pneumococcal vaccinations. Support was provided to a group of 1,856 residents affected by the direct and indirect effects of the pandemic in the area of mental health.

For the purposes of this study, the survey was conducted between May and June 2025. The authors invited all 15 people involved in these projects to participate in the survey. Ultimately, 13 people responded, as it turned out that the other two, despite their initial declaration, withdrew from the survey, citing personal reasons.

The interview questionnaire consisted of five questions, including four open-ended questions:

1. What specific forms of interpersonal risk (conflict, lack of trust, stress and burnout, misunderstanding of roles) occur in healthcare project teams and how do they affect the well-being of their employees?

2. How do interpersonal conflicts in a health project team affect the implementation of tasks and the achievement of health project goals?

3. What is the level of trust among health project team members, and how would you assess the level of trust that health project clients have in project team members?

4. What are the consequences (dysfunctions) of a lack of understanding of the role performed by employees of health project teams (the expectations of the employee and the supervisor diverge, the employee's expectations are not aligned with the tasks in the project).

Question five: In your opinion, how do individual elements of interpersonal risk affect employee well-being and project implementation effectiveness? This was a closed question and referred to a scale from 1 (very weak) to 5 (very strong). The respondents assessed individual elements of interpersonal risk: conflict, lack of trust, stress and burnout, misunderstanding of

roles. In addition, the respondents were asked to assess well-being and its impact on the effectiveness and objectives of the project.

3. Research results

The research material consisted of statements made by participants in health projects who anonymously shared their experiences of working in health project teams. The analysis was qualitative in nature – the statements were categorised according to four main dysfunctions: conflicts, lack of trust, stress and burnout, and misunderstanding of roles. Their impact on the mental and physical well-being of employees was also identified.

The statements obtained were systematised and analysed below.

The respondents were asked about specific forms of interpersonal risk they encountered during the implementation of health projects and which occur in project teams. The respondents listed all the elements that occur, i.e. conflict, lack of trust, stress and burnout, misunderstanding of roles.

This is confirmed by the following statements:
– 'All of the above forms occur, but with varying intensity' (W-6).
– 'All these forms occur. Projects take quite a long time, and everyone goes through a crisis' (W-9).
– 'All risks are without exception' (W-10).
– 'All these factors directly translate into a decline in the mental and physical well-being of employees' (W-12).

As can be seen, the forms of interpersonal risk presented are familiar to the respondents, but it should be noted that the selected forms were of particular importance to individual respondents. Firstly, they referred to conflicts that occurred at the level of communication, as well as organisational issues and approaches to work. It turns out that conflict is the most frequently indicated dysfunction, which takes various forms: verbal skirmishes and grievances intensifying during periods of intense work, disputes over priorities and methods of operation, communication conflicts resulting from misinterpretation of messages, or conflicts over resources, responsibilities, and even everyday issues (e.g., access to tea). This is confirmed by the following statements from the respondents:
– 'Constant verbal altercations. Someone always has a grievance against someone else, especially during busy periods' (W-2).
– 'Conflicts – often arise from differences in approach to tasks, unclear communication or mismatched expectations' (W-12).
– 'Conflict – most often about priorities and how to act, when someone doesn't understand or ignores the opinions of others' (W-11).

– 'Communication conflicts, misunderstanding of the information being conveyed' (W-5).
– 'Conflicts – about everything: money, tasks, job position, tea' (W-13).

Certainly, all forms of conflict identified by the respondents undermine employee well-being by lowering morale, leading to divisions within the team, mental fatigue, frustration and discouragement.

Another form of interpersonal risk examined was a lack of trust. This lack of trust manifests itself both in employee-supervisor relationships and in intra-team relationships. In their statements, the respondents referred to supervisors who took credit for the team's successes or pointed to their lack of commitment in difficult moments. They claimed that project managers did not treat employees in their team equally and did not provide feedback. Furthermore, although they spoke about project teams, they pointed to a frequent tendency to individualise tasks ('I do everything myself') or abandon them altogether. Based on the above, it can be assumed that managers leading health projects have competence gaps in team management.

Five respondents referred to a lack of trust in the study. Below are selected statements from the respondents:

– 'Lack of trust in the project manager. When everything is fine, it's fine, but when something goes wrong, he disappears' (W-1).
– 'Lack of trust – if someone doesn't believe that the team will "deliver", they either do everything themselves or do nothing' (W-11).
– 'Not interested in the project, but takes credit for successes' (W-1).
– 'Lack of trust – this can arise when team members do not receive sufficient feedback or feel that they are being treated unfairly' (W-12).
– 'Lack of trust – it's like this, if people like working with each other, they trust each other' (W-13).

Mutual trust within a team is certainly one of the key factors that play a significant role in the functioning of a project team. Among the respondents' statements, one can identify factors that they themselves indicate as conducive to trust within the team. These include:

– Team stability, which promotes trust: 'In the team, we have been together for some time, so we tend to trust each other' (W-1), 'We have already completed several projects together and we know each other' (W-2), 'The level of trust is high – we have developed rules of cooperation and we know what to expect from each other' (W-10).
– Trust based on knowledge of competencies and division of tasks: 'The most important thing was knowing what each person was capable of, and this was accepted' (W-7).
– 'People worked at what they did best' (W-7).
– 'The division of tasks was great' (W-5).
– Trust visible in cooperation preferences: 'When dividing tasks, people say who they want to work with and who they would rather not work with' (W-9).

- Similarly, just as it is possible to identify factors that promote a sense of trust within a team, it is also possible to identify difficulties and limitations of trust within a team in the respondents' statements.

- Personnel changes hinder the building of trust: 'You can't build trust when people are constantly changing' (W-1), 'Trust varied – it was great in one team, worse in another' (W-7).

- Tensions despite familiarity: 'We know each other, but that doesn't mean we don't get on each other's nerves sometimes' (W-2).

- Lack of reflection on trust: 'I've never thought about it' (W-6).

- 'I don't know' (W-10).

As previously indicated, health projects involve risks related to cooperation and trust between clients (patients) and project team members. The respondents indicated that they had encountered manifestations of client trust, which was expressed through relationality and contact: 'Sometimes you get the impression that they come to talk' (W-4), 'When they call, they usually ask about specific people' (W-9), 'Some clients actively participate in the project' (W-12).

Not all responses indicated positive relationships and mutual trust. The research results include statements that indicate limited or difficult to assess customer trust: 'It's hard to say' (W-5), 'Honestly, I don't know'.

'I haven't thought about customers' (W-10).

For a complete overview of the situation, it is also necessary to point out external manifestations of mistrust: 'There are people who do not want to sign the GDPR at all – they probably do not care'.

'Maybe they just do not trust us' (W-11). As well as misunderstandings and false beliefs on the part of customers: 'Medical staff think that we are the ones who come up with the rates – as if we were the dog in the manger' (W-5). 'It is unclear whether it is distrust of us, the procedures or the institution' (W-12).

Trust is a category that is very important for an employee's functioning in a team, because its absence creates tension and frustration. It also reduces openness and willingness to cooperate. In this case, we can also talk about the emergence of a sense of injustice and demotivation. This, in turn, can lead to escalating stress and burnout. Stress is a constant element of project work, indicated by almost all respondents. They referred to the daily stress associated with time pressure ('everything now') and the ambiguity of rest rules. They pointed to the lack of emotional and structural support from colleagues, superiors, but also from the entire organisation. Furthermore, they pointed to the frequent occurrence of burnout, including among young employees, as well as physical and mental exhaustion leading to resignation or internal withdrawal. This is confirmed by the following selected statements:

- 'Stress and conflicts related to the tasks performed' (W-8).
- 'Burnout and misunderstanding of the role of a project manager' (W-3).
- 'Stress – it's there every day' (W-13).
- 'Stress and burnout – they appear when everything has to be done "right now", and there are no clear rules for rest and support' (W-11).
- 'Burnout – it happens more and more often and to younger and younger people' (W-13).
- 'I can't be in conflict with people, but sometimes I'm fed up when I leave work. I'm mentally exhausted' (W-4).

Undoubtedly, increasing stress and burnout are allies in reducing commitment and efficiency at work. The resulting fatigue, discouragement and loss of energy generate mental and physical problems (e.g. pain, lack of motivation). Such symptoms may require pharmacological intervention.

Another element of interpersonal risk is a misunderstanding of roles. A lack of clarity regarding the scope of responsibilities is a source of organisational chaos. The respondents asked about the definitions of the concept. They did not understand the essence of the issue. After explaining the meaning of 'misunderstanding of the role', the respondents' statements included comments about ambiguities regarding the project manager's tasks, difficulties in transferring responsibility in the event of staff turnover, difficulties in training young employees, and problems with delegating and accepting responsibility. Once again, we can talk about the incompetence and lack of resourcefulness of the project manager. It is worth quoting the following statements here: „ Misunderstanding the role of the project manager" (W-10).

- 'When it is unclear who is responsible for what, chaos ensues' (W-11).
- 'Misunderstanding – especially with staff turnover or insufficient communication' (W-12).
- 'It is difficult to teach new employees, especially young ones, new tasks, especially routine tasks' (W-13).

This state of affairs leads to employee frustration. Feeling underappreciated reduces an employee's commitment to their work. In turn, a change in behaviour can cause confusion among other employees, which in turn can lead to organisational chaos, reduced motivation and low team morale.

Interpersonal conflicts within a project team usually have a negative impact – they slow down the pace of work, cause delays, worsen the atmosphere and communication, and reduce employee engagement. Although some people minimise their impact, most point to specific organisational and emotional effects that can hinder the successful implementation of a project.

Project management requires close cooperation between team members. However, intense work dynamics, individual differences, time pressure and unclear roles can lead to interpersonal conflicts. If not managed effectively, these conflicts can disrupt task completion and undermine the well-being of project participants.

The next question focused on the impact of interpersonal conflicts within the project team on the implementation of tasks and the achievement of project objectives. An analysis of the research results shows that seven areas of significance have been identified.

The first of these is the project implementation time. Conflicts lead to delays in the implementation of tasks and the entire project: 'They have some impact, probably in terms of delays' (W-1). 'Delays in project implementation' (W-4). 'To some extent, they delay project implementation and generate higher costs' (W-3). 'Conflicts clearly slow down the pace of work' (W-5). 'Delays and tensions begin' (W-7).

The second consequence of conflict within a project team is the atmosphere and motivation of the team. Difficulties arise with the atmosphere, which affects the willingness to work and motivation: 'I don't want to come to work' (W-7). 'The tasks are moving forward, but the atmosphere at work is difficult' (W-11). 'The atmosphere is tense, but it doesn't affect anything' (W-12). 'Instead of focusing on tasks, the team focuses on itself – on emotions, misunderstandings, and resentment' (W-10).

The third consequence is the impact on the effectiveness and quality of cooperation. It turns out that the fluidity of cooperation and the effectiveness of teamwork are declining: 'They reduce the fluidity of cooperation, disrupt communication and necessitate intervention' (W-12). 'Conflicts slow down the completion of tasks' (W-13). 'The team wastes time resolving tensions' (W-11). 'It is clear that employees are not as committed to the project as they could be' (W-5).

The fourth identified element of the impact of conflict is its significance for communication and task distribution. Problems arise with communication and understanding of roles/tasks: 'Communication and understanding of all tasks and not judging who does more and who does less...' (W-8). 'Not talking about who does more important things and who does less important things' (W-12).

The fifth area that can be identified as a consequence of conflicts within the team is escapist behaviour and a decline in commitment. There is resistance to additional tasks, and people take sick leave: 'There is resistance to performing additional tasks, or they take sick leave' (W-1). 'Sometimes employees "de-stress" on beneficiaries' (W-6).

The sixth area that can be identified is the importance of experience and attempts to cope with conflict situations. It turns out that, according to the respondents, experienced employees cope better and maintain progress: 'Experienced people know what project implementation is all about and what to do to move the project forward' (W-1).

'We try to resolve any misunderstandings' (W-3).

"After all, everyone is responsible for the implementation of the project" (W-6).

It should be noted that the results of the study – the respondents' statements – present neutral opinions or opinions denying the impact of conflicts. Some do not notice a significant impact of conflicts: "I think it has no impact" (W-9).

"They don't have an impact" (W-10). "It's rather more difficult to work because the atmosphere is tense, but it doesn't have an impact" (W-13).

The consequences indicated are also not indifferent to the well-being of employees, which is becoming increasingly important in the effective performance of tasks. It should be remembered here that well-being is a general sense of satisfaction and psychophysical balance in professional life, which consists of psychological comfort (lack of stress, a sense of meaning and satisfaction), good social relations (cooperation, support, trust), a sense of influence and agency, and emotional security (no fear, the ability to express oneself without risk of conflict). Following the respondents' statements, it can be concluded that conflicts affect the well-being of employees in various ways. Chronic stress or a rapid increase in stress causes fatigue, emotional exhaustion and, over time, a decrease in mental resilience: 'It takes a toll on your nerves' (W-1).

'Instead of focusing on tasks, the team focuses on itself – on emotions, misunderstandings, resentment' (W-2). 'The atmosphere is tense...' (W-4).

Being under stress for a long time causes the atmosphere and relationships at work to deteriorate:

'I don't want to come to work' (W-5). 'The tasks are moving forward, but the atmosphere is difficult' (W-8). 'Communication and understanding of all tasks... not judging who does more...' (W-10). This certainly leads to a decline in trust and a sense of belonging, alienation, and a deterioration of social relationships, which are key to well-being. A prolonged atmosphere leads to a decrease in efficiency in the implementation of project tasks.

Employee well-being is a tool that can be assumed to protect against burnout and provide an opportunity for longer employment. Today, when there are discussions about extending working hours and raising the retirement age, this takes on measurable significance. Therefore, when analysing the respondents' statements, it is worth looking for the proposed factors that protect well-being. According to the respondents, these are:

- team experience: 'Experienced people know what to do...' (W-9),
- awareness of shared responsibility ('After all, everyone is responsible for the implementation of the project...' (W-10),
- willingness to resolve misunderstandings: 'We try to resolve any misunderstandings...' (W-12).

At the end of the interview, respondents were asked to assess the impact of interpersonal risks on their well-being and on the effectiveness and objectives of health projects. In the first case, it turns out that conflict has the greatest impact on the well-being of health project team members (4.5%). Stress and burnout come second (4.3%). This seems obvious, as the occurrence of both of these risks can generate mental and physical discomfort. This, in turn, affects the work of the project team. The results for other interpersonal risks are interesting, namely lack of trust (3.8%) and misunderstanding of roles (3.1%). In the first case, the interpersonal risk associated with a lack of trust was indicated; this may be due to

indifference towards other members of the health project team. Having strong self-esteem and confidence in one's abilities may make the trust of others unnecessary. The same may be true of misunderstanding of roles. However, it should be noted that the respondents' previous statements, as well as their behaviour during the interview, showed uncertainty on their part. It can be assumed that this statement is not understandable.

It can therefore be assumed that if the concept of misunderstanding the role is not understood, it may not be assessed in terms of how it actually plays a role in relation to employee well-being. The interviews with respondent five (W5) and respondent nine (W9) are noteworthy, as their average ratings for all risks are five. These were recorded as two interviews in which the respondents decided to give all interpersonal risks the highest rating. These may be the most extreme statements, which may result from either very high experience in working in health project teams or little experience in assessing situations.

Table 1.
The impact of interpersonal risks on the well-being of health project team members

Interpersonal risks	Distribution of responses													
	W1	W2	W3	W4	W5	W6	W7	W8	W9	W10	W11	W12	W13	Average rating
Conflict	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	4	3	4	5	**4,5**
Lack of trust	3	4	3	2	5	4	4	4	5	4	3	4	4	**3,8**
Stress and burnout	4	5	5	5	5	5	3	4	5	4	4	4	3	**4,3**
Misunderstanding the role	2	4	3	3	5	2	2	3	5	2	5	2	2	**3,1**
Average rating	**3,2**	**4,5**	**4,0**	**3,7**	**5,0**	**4,0**	**3,5**	**3,75**	**5,0**	**3,5**	**3,75**	**3,5**	**3,5**	

Source: Authors' own.

On the other hand, when analysing data related to the assessment of interpersonal risks in terms of their impact on the effectiveness and objectives of health projects, the assessment is different. First of all, no interpersonal risk exceeded the average score of four. The average rating ranges between 3.2 and 3.9. This would indicate that work is treated as a priority and that whatever happens in the team should not interfere with the achievement of health project goals. This approach may stem from the fact that health projects, due to their nature – supporting patient health – are of particular importance. The highest rated and second most influential factors affecting the effectiveness and objectives of the project were conflicts within the team and misunderstanding of roles (3.9%). Here, in turn, the assessment that failure to perform tasks correctly affects the implementation of a health project seems to be correct. On the other hand, lack of trust is again rated lowest (3.2%). This is puzzling and warrants further research. It seems that a high level of mutual trust is conducive to the achievement of the intended results and objectives of health projects and, what is more, gives a sense of security to individual employees in the project team, as well as a sense of security to the project manager.

Table 2.
The impact of interpersonal risks on the effectiveness and objectives of health projects

Interpersonal risks	Rozkład odpowiedzi													
	W1	W2	W3	W4	W5	W6	W7	W8	W9	W10	W11	W12	W13	Average rating
Conflict	3	5	4	4	3	3	3	4	3	5	4	5	5	**3,9**
Lack of trust	3	3	3	2	2	4	3	4	4	3	4	3	4	**3,2**
Stress and burnout	3	3	4	4	3	4	4	3	5	3	3	3	4	**3,5**
Misunderstanding the role	4	5	5	5	2	4	3	4	5	3	4	3	4	**3,9**
Average rating	3,2	4	4	3,8	2,4	3,8	3,4	3,8	4,2	3,4	3,8	3,4	4	

Source: Authors' own.

On the other hand, when analysing data related to the assessment of interpersonal risks in terms of their impact on the effectiveness and objectives of health projects, the assessment is different. First of all, no personal risk exceeded the average score of four. The average rating ranges between 3.2 and 3.9. This would indicate that work is treated as a priority and that whatever happens in the team should not interfere with the achievement of health project goals. This approach may stem from the fact that health projects, due to their nature – supporting patient health – are of particular importance. The highest rated and second most influential factor affecting the effectiveness and objectives of the project is conflict within the team, as well as a lack of understanding of roles (3.9%). Here, in turn, the assessment that failure to perform tasks correctly affects the implementation of a health project seems to be correct. On the other hand, lack of trust is again rated lowest (3.2%). This is puzzling and worthy of further research.

4. Discussion

The presented research results confirm that the identified dysfunctions related to interpersonal risks in the project occur in the analysed project teams with varying intensity, but with a clear impact on the well-being of employees. General statements confirm that there are no projects free from such problems – any form of interpersonal or organisational dysfunction directly affects the mental, emotional and physical health of team members.

This is confirmed by earlier studies (e.g. Bakker, Demerouti, 2007), which indicate that poorly managed project teams lead to increased stress, conflicts and burnout. In particular, role mismatches and lack of trust within the team pose a serious threat to the effective functioning of the team.

Projects, as forms of complex and interdisciplinary tasks, require close cooperation between team members. A key condition for the effectiveness of this cooperation is transparency of roles and responsibilities. Without it, dysfunctions arise that can destabilise the project and its results.

Interpersonal conflicts negatively affect well-being, leading to:

- increased stress,
- deterioration of the atmosphere and relationships,
- decreased motivation,
- reduced commitment and job satisfaction.

In the long term, this can result in burnout, absenteeism and even staff turnover. That is why it is important to focus not only on conflict resolution, but also on a work culture based on open communication, empathy and shared responsibility.

One of the most common consequences of a lack of understanding of roles was staff turnover. Employees leave the team because they cannot find their place in a structure with unclear expectations. The lack of communication with the supervisor, who did not present the project assumptions or consult on the distribution of tasks, was often pointed out. There were also voices about the 'it will work out somehow' strategy, which meant a lack of planning and management. The consequence of imprecise role definitions is the disruption of interpersonal relationships.

A lack of understanding of roles leads to uncertainty, which in turn affects employee well-being and attitudes. A lack of understanding of roles led to strong negative emotions. The respondents' statements indicated frustration, dissatisfaction with work, a sense of meaninglessness of actions, as well as burnout. The respondents reported a lack of motivation and a sense of meaning in their work, especially when tasks were unclear or assigned without context.

It is no surprise that a lack of understanding of instructions and one's scope of activities leads to reduced project efficiency. Without clearly defined roles, tasks could be duplicated, performed incorrectly or completely overlooked. Respondents reported that they did not know who was responsible for what, which led to the need to correct tasks or have them taken over by other people.

The data obtained confirms previous findings in the literature on project management. Clear assignment of roles and responsibilities is a prerequisite for effective project team performance. The absence of these elements leads to diffusion of responsibility, deterioration of relationships, and increased stress among employees.

5. Conclusions – trends shaping the well-being of project team employees

Based on the research and analysis conducted, the following trends can be identified:

- Conflicts, mistrust, stress and misunderstanding of roles are common in project teams.
- All these phenomena have a negative impact on the mental and physical well-being of team members.

- Interpersonal conflicts in project teams have a negative impact on the pace and quality of project implementation.
- They disrupt communication, atmosphere and employee engagement.
- They have a clear impact on mental well-being: they cause stress, frustration and burnout.
- The factors that differentiate the effects of conflicts are experience, soft skills and the organisational climate.
- The level of trust in project teams is mostly assessed positively, but it depends on stability, experience and clarity of cooperation.
- Customer trust is more difficult to assess, varied and often individual – it requires active building through transparency, communication and repeat contact.
- Lack of trust – both within the team and on the part of customers – can be a serious risk to the successful implementation of projects.

Particular attention was paid to trust within the project team and in relations with clients, with a focus on the stability of these relations, challenges and practical observations.

Trust is one of the most important resources that a project team can build. It is the foundation of effective cooperation, promotes the exchange of information and contributes to the higher quality of the tasks performed. Equally important, though often less tangible, is the trust that the beneficiaries of the activities place in the project team: customers, patients, users. How do these two levels of trust manifest themselves in project practice? The responses of project participants paint a varied picture, but with clear trends. Many statements indicate a high level of trust among employees, especially in teams that have been working together for a long time. Participants emphasise that trust grows with shared experience, knowledge of each other's competencies and a clear division of roles. Key elements here include:

- long-term cooperation and stability,
- clear division of tasks and awareness of strengths,
- practical relationships.

However, building trust is not always easy. A team struggling with high staff turnover encounters difficulties in creating stable relationships ('You can't build trust when people are constantly changing'). Sometimes, despite long-term cooperation, tensions and conflicts arise that affect the atmosphere and relationships ('We know each other, but that doesn't mean we don't get on each other's nerves sometimes').

Customer trust seems to be selective and personal rather than institutional in nature – it often centres around specific, well-known and accessible employees.

Both in internal and external relations, trust proves to be a dynamic and diverse phenomenon. A high level of trust within a team promotes smooth project implementation, better communication and understanding of roles. On the other hand, a lack of trust – especially with high turnover – generates uncertainty and weakens shared responsibility.

In customer relations, trust is more difficult to assess, but it has a real impact on the quality of cooperation. Beneficiaries are more willing to engage in projects when they trust the people implementing them, especially those with whom they have direct contact. Where trust is not consciously built, barriers, misunderstandings and distance may arise.

A lack of understanding of the roles played by project team members leads to:

– an increase in conflicts and interpersonal tensions,
– a decrease in motivation and an increase in frustration,
– a deterioration in the quality of work and team effectiveness,
– employee turnover and an increase in organisational costs.

Practical recommendations and suggested tools

– Implementation of training in communication and conflict resolution, including a communication plan tailored to the scope of the project, specifying the channels, frequency and scope of information exchange, development of escalation procedures enabling quick and constructive dispute resolution, and regular status meetings – supporting open information exchange and enabling early response to tensions within the team.
– Use of mediation and facilitation in difficult conflict situations.
– Building a culture based on openness, trust and shared responsibility.
– Preventing burnout through wellbeing programmes – training in stress management, work-life balance, openness to feedback – creating a space for reporting problems without fear of consequences.
– Supporting project leaders in emotion management and mediation.
– Enhancing well-being by caring for working conditions and mental health.
– Investing in permanent project teams whose members know each other and have the opportunity to work together on a long-term basis.
– Transparent division of roles and responsibilities, taking into account the strengths of team members, adjusting workloads through monitoring and flexible schedules.
– Strengthening individual relationships with clients while caring for the image of the team as a whole.
– Educating clients about project implementation principles to reduce the scope for misunderstandings and increase trust in the institution.

Trust is not something that is given once and for all – it must be nurtured at every stage of the project. Its presence can become an important resource that determines the success or failure of project activities.

It is recommended to implement communication and training mechanisms that will help employees understand their roles and align expectations between employees and supervisors. Clarity of roles and responsibilities should be one of the key elements of project management.

Contemporary trends revolve around a holistic approach to project team members, including a focus on, among other things, the employer's flexibility in terms of the time and mode of performing tasks, an individual approach to employees by adapting forms of support, including psychological support, while enabling more effective actions to support well-being and build a positive atmosphere in the project team.

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