

## THE TRANSFORMATION OF SOCIAL WELFARE MANAGERS' ROLES: AN EMPIRICAL DIAGNOSIS

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**Purpose:** The aim of this article is to diagnose the managerial roles of people managing social welfare organizations at the local government level in Poland in the context of changing approaches to the provision of social services.

**Design/methodology/approach:** The theoretical part draws on the literature on *new public management* and one of its instruments – ‘managerial management’. The empirical part uses the *Participatory Action Research* method in 2573 local social welfare organizations (OPS) and 328 local social welfare organizations (PCPR) in Poland. Using formative indicators, the extent to which managers are able to clearly formulate goals and tasks and enforce their implementation was determined. An attempt was made to determine whether managers have the authority to choose how to perform tasks.

**Findings:** The diagnosis revealed a lack of autonomy in decision making and a lack of influence on setting the vision for the organization's development. Managers are employed on the basis of employment contracts.

**Research limitations/implications:** The results of the study indicate the need to redefine managerial roles and raise awareness among social welfare organizations of new challenges. Local authorities should also consider increasing the autonomy of social welfare managers.

**Practical implications:** An inherent element of the rationalization of organizational structures within units remains their flattening and reduction in employment, primarily at the highest and lowest levels.

**Social implications:** Social welfare managers should be given greater operational autonomy, but at the same time be held more accountable for achieving measurable results. In a modern approach to public service management, the manager becomes primarily a results manager, strengthening decision-making roles.

**Originality/value:** Managers should present their vision by taking a broad view of social issues, anticipating, and building visions for the practical application of scientific achievements, as well as entering new areas of interpersonal relations by undertaking new ventures and contributing to the building of trust, which is an essential element of social capital.

**Keywords:** public management, managerial management, social welfare organizations, social services.

**Category of the paper:** Research paper.

## 1. Introduction

There is no consensus in the literature on the roles of managers in the public sector. The reason for this is, on the one hand, the existence of different models of public service in different countries and, on the other hand, the varying degrees of public management mechanisms. Another problem is the lack of adequate decentralization of management, which results in the depreciation of the position of senior managers in organizations. A positive development that should be taken into account is the emergence of a new perspective on the role of organizational leaders. Managers are expected to outline a vision for the development of the organization and determine how to implement it. Leaders are not expected to implement the vision on their own, but to find ways to convince the organization's employees of the need for change and to obtain from them the tools necessary to carry it out (Hartley, 2021). In an era of globalization and dynamic change, it is important how social services will be managed in cross-sectoral cooperation with other entities such as large corporations, international organizations, nongovernmental organizations, or data cloud management organizations, while at the same time gaining legitimacy as one of the main characteristics determining the relationship between the organization and its environment (Suddaby, Bitektine, Haack, 2017). H. Mintzberg proposed one of the most significant concepts describing the actual roles performed by managers in organizations. He showed that management is not just about planning, organizing, and controlling, but is a set of interrelated roles, often performed under time pressure, fragmentation, and discontinuity of activities (Mintzberg, 1973). The article analyzes 'managerial management' as one of the instruments of the *New Public Management (NPM)* concept (Hood, 1991) in the context of new challenges facing social welfare systems (Nielsen, Hammerslev, 2024). The adoption of a market orientation within the *NPM* concept was intended to increase the efficiency of public sector entities (Lynn, 1998), lead to rationalization of expenditure, improve management in the public sector, and improve cooperation between all sectors of the economy (Ferlie et al., 1996). In the context of public services, and more specifically social services, citizen participation in the design of support is gaining in importance. Citizens, social organizations, and local communities cocreate public value, jointly define needs, create solutions, and share responsibility for their implementation. The role of the administration should undergo a transformation from a dominant role to a moderating role (Bryson et al., 2014). In view of this, this article diagnoses managerial roles in local government social welfare organizations in Poland in the context of changes caused, among other things, technological development, migration, negative demographic processes, and the need to rationalize public spending.

This study adopts a mixed methodological approach combining a critical literature review with Participatory Action Research (PAR), enabling both theoretical grounding and empirical validation (Chevalier, Buckles, 2019; Eden, Huxham, 1996). The main objective of the article

is to diagnose the roles of managers in social welfare organizations at the local government level in Poland within the framework of New Public Management (Hood, 1991; Ferlie et al., 1996). The significance of the study lies in addressing the growing complexity of social service delivery and the need for increased managerial autonomy and accountability in public organizations (Bryson et al., 2017; Hartley, 2021). The research tests four hypotheses (H1-H4) derived from the literature on managerial management and public sector reforms (Hood, Dixon, 2015; Berman, 2025). By integrating theoretical assumptions with empirical evidence, the study contributes to the understanding of the transformation of managerial roles in contemporary welfare systems.

## 2. Literature review

The term ‘managerial management’ was coined as a result of *NPM* reforms. The slogan of D. Osborne and T. Gaebler: ‘let managers rule and authorities steer, not row’ (Osborne, Gaebler 1994, p. 34) is the best definition of the concept of ‘managerial management’. In the initial phase of the development of the *NPM* concept, managers were invited to ‘steer’. They were offered a choice of tools to achieve their goals in the most effective way for recipients as customers, rather than citizens, as was previously the case (Hood, Dixon, 2015). ‘Managerial management’ became an instrument of the *NPM* concept, which defines managerial roles and leadership standards, the development of public services, and how they are implemented in public management (Cook, 1998; Entwistle, 2021; Hartley, 2025). ‘Managerial management’ is primarily the replacement of the bureaucratic model of administration with a ‘culture of results’ (Maqdliyan, Setiavan, 2023). This means that managers have greater authority in choosing the tools for performing the tasks within their areas of responsibility (Berman, 2025). This element is referred to as flexibility in management, including freedom to choose a management style (Gruening, 2001). As part of the reforms carried out under the *NPM* concept, the terms of employment contracts with top-level managers were shortened. In return, high, individually negotiated bonuses were offered and the best managers were offered lucrative contracts (Dan et al., 2024). ‘Managerial management’ focuses on the goals set by the *NPM* concept in the context of the ability to formulate tasks and enforce them. Managers should therefore be able to outline a vision for the development of the organization and indicate methods for its implementation (Apaza, 2025). Among personality traits, charisma ranks first. ‘Managerial management’ is strongly associated with decentralization of management, in which tasks and responsibility for their implementation are transferred to lower levels of the organization (Van Dooren et al., 2015).

The main idea behind 'managerial management' is the ability to clearly formulate goals and tasks and achieve them. It gives people in managerial positions much greater authority in choosing how to carry out tasks that fall within their areas of responsibility (Zelek, 2023). It involves forming a new perspective on the role of organizational leaders and the qualities they should possess (Guy, 2025). Managers are expected to be able to outline a vision for the organization's development and identify ways to achieve it (Bartram, Casimir, 2007). At the same time, leaders are required to find the right ways to convince employees of the need for change (Cannaerts, 2025).

H. Mintzberg's concept provides an analytical framework for interpreting the role of a manager. Mintzberg points out that management consists of ten interrelated roles: interpersonal, informational, and decision-making, and not just the performance of classic management functions (Mintzberg, 1973). Under the new approach to public management, there is a clear shift in emphasis in the structure of these roles, particularly toward decision-making roles, which results from the emphasis on efficiency, results orientation, and managerial autonomy (Hood, 1991). At the same time, the specific nature of the public sector reinforces interpersonal and informational roles, especially the role of liaison, associated with operating in a complex environment of stakeholders and political pressure (Pollitt, Bouckaert, 2011). As a result, public managers, including welfare managers, perform the roles described by Mintzberg in a hybrid manner, combining 'managerial management' with the requirements of public and legal accountability (Zelek et al., 2025a).

A public organization manager is a person responsible for the implementation of a plan, program or the delivery of a product or service, directly and indirectly responsible to a public organization (Bovaird, Loeffler, 2024). In the decision-making process, this is a person who should have a significant level of autonomy in the disposal of the organization's financial resources and human capital (Barlow et al., 1996; Kożuch, 2004). This definition of the term 'manager' should facilitate the classification of public institution management personnel (Depre et al., 1996).

The task of managers in public organizations is to manage organizations providing public services effectively and economically, i.e., efficiently, in response to customer needs (Kożuch, 2004). In the public sector, managers are leaders whose primary responsibility is to manage organizations that provide high-quality public services, respond to new challenges in the environment, and keep pace with technological changes (Juknevičienė et al., 2025). Managers solve problems of non-compliance with political rationality criteria, taking into account economic rationality applied in a market economy (Kożuch, Sienkiewicz-Małyjurek, 2014). Public sector managers should not be restricted in their ability to be entrepreneurial and manage results. In practice, however, they encounter difficulties and are responsible for results that they cannot manage due to their excessive dependence on the authorities (Baryson et al., 2014). They should meet the following criteria (Kożuch, 2003): (1) responsibility for the implementation of a program or the delivery of a product or service; (2) evaluation of their work

on the basis of achieved results, according to clearly defined criteria and management objectives; (3) appointment to positions (positions in the organization) on the basis of an employment contract; (4) direct and indirect accountability to the public institution; (5) a significant level of autonomy in the decision-making process; (6) freedom in the use of financial and human resources; (7) achieving goals and results through human resources. The most important criterion for fulfilling the assumptions of the *NPM* concept in relation to 'managerial management' is giving managers freedom in performing their functions in exchange for imposing greater responsibility on them before citizens (Gregory, 2000; Naschold, Otter, 1996).

The emergence of the public manager function has brought with it a number of organizational problems. One of the barriers to the effective performance of managerial functions in the public sector is the direct measurement of the effects of their work (Stroińska, Tyszkiewicz, 2018). As M. Zawicki notes, local government often exhibits patterns that are contrary to 'managerial management'. These include (Zawicki, 2011): (1) focus on current issues; (2) giving managers detailed instructions; (3) lack of or low consistency in accounting for results; (4) a tendency to interfere in the performance of tasks assigned to managers; (5) the need to be well informed; (6) creating conditions for subordinates to consult on even trivial problems related to the performance of their tasks.

As L. Barendsen and H. Gardner note, social welfare managers should focus on solving social problems by following the example of mechanisms operating in the private sector and distinguish themselves through 'business acumen' (Barendsen, Gardner, 2004). They are visionaries, leaders, business leaders who act as educators and mentors, passing on practical skills and social values to their employees (Pache, Chowdhury, 2012). The roles of leaders and mentors are particularly important from the point of view of social welfare, whose mission is to improve the situation of people in need (Dacin et al., 2011).

Managers of social welfare organizations should have extensive knowledge of formal and legal issues (knowledge of laws, regulations, administrative decisions), but also mental resilience in the face of emerging problems (Zelek, 2025a).

When analyzing the roles of social welfare managers, attention should also be paid to senior managers in local government in Poland, a role performed by: commune heads, mayors, city presidents, elected in direct elections under *the Act of June 20, 2002, on the direct election of commune heads, mayors, and city presidents* (Journal of Laws of 2002, No. 113, item 984). Due to the electoral system, the act gives them a strong social mandate, strengthening their leadership (Journal of Laws of 2002, No. 113, item 984). When examining 'managerial management' one should also bear in mind the tasks of county administrators resulting from: (1) *the Act of March 8, 1990, on municipal self-government* (Journal of Laws of 1990, No. 16, item 95); (2) *the Act of June 5, 1998, on county self-government* (Journal of Laws 1998, No. 91, item 578). These legal acts grant very broad powers in managing subordinate staff within offices to commune heads, mayors, city presidents, and county administrators. However,

they have less influence on the management of subordinate organizations, including social welfare organizations at the local government level, that is, social welfare centers (OPS) and county family welfare centers (PCPR) (Zelek, 2024a). These managers are responsible to the executive bodies of local government (Zelek, 2024b).

As O.E. Hughes points out: ‘administration means following instructions, while management means achieving results’ (Hughes, 1994). It should be emphasized that management functions in social welfare should be performed by managers who, through their commitment to performing their tasks, are guided by a mission to help people in difficult life situations (Zelek, 2025b).

Based on a review of the literature, the following research hypotheses were adopted:

H1: Managers are dependent on their superiors in decision making.

This hypothesis reflects the persistent tension identified in the literature between formal managerial responsibility and limited decision-making autonomy in public sector organizations.

H2: The directions of the OPS and PCPR activities are consulted with managers.

This assumption relates to participatory governance and co-creation concepts, which emphasize the inclusion of managers in strategic decision-making processes.

H3: The charisma of the candidates is taken into account when selecting them for managerial positions.

This hypothesis refers to the growing importance of soft leadership competencies, such as charisma, in modern public management paradigms.

H4: Managers are employed on the basis of employment contracts, not management contracts.

This assumption highlights the institutional rigidity of employment forms in the public sector, which may limit the implementation of flexible, performance-oriented management models.

Despite the extensive body of literature on New Public Management and managerial roles, there is a limited number of empirical studies examining how these concepts are operationalized in social welfare organizations at the local government level. In particular, there is a research gap concerning the actual scope of managerial autonomy, decision-making power, and role configuration in hybrid governance systems combining administrative control with managerial principles. This study addresses this gap by providing large-scale empirical evidence from Polish social welfare institutions.

### 3. Methods

The main objective of the study was to diagnose ‘managerial management’ in local government social welfare organizations in Poland, that is, social welfare centers at the commune level (OPS) and district family welfare centers at the district level (PCPR). The diagnosis covered managers and employees of organizations at the lowest administrative level (Journal of Laws, 2004, No. 64, item 593). The study used the *Participatory Action Research (PAR)* method (Chevalier, Buckles, 2019), which offers broad possibilities for solving organizational problems (Eden, Huxham, 1996). The *PAR* method uses scientific achievements in solving practical social problems, with the broad participation of people affected by the problem (Cornish et al., 2023). The basic assumption of the research process based on the *PAR* method was scientific consulting, also known as research strategy or action research (Heron, 1996). The participants in the study became its full subjects (Brydon-Miller et al., 2020). The subjects were co-participants in the research process in all areas of research (Karlsen, 1991).

In the first phase of the study, a set of constructs (areas within aggregates) was defined, specifying their theoretical and empirical meaning. Each construct was formed using a combination of latent observable variables, that is, formative indicators (Diamantopoulos and Winklhofer, 2001). Next, a scaling procedure was selected and the decision made to use the Likert scale. This scale is characterized by high reliability coefficients and high correlation of results (Likert et al., 1993). On the basis of observable variables and sets of questions, an initial version of the research tool was created. Using electronic communication tools, a network of experimenting organizations was created and they were then invited to co-create the research tool. Due to the fact that the entire country was being studied, in accordance with the assumptions of the *PAR* method, in the first phase of creating the research tool, the OPS were divided according to the different specificities of their areas of operation according to the administrative division of the country. For each observable variable (construct) of ‘managerial management’ sets of eight statements were created, allowing study participants to evaluate this construct. The next step was to hide the observable variables and change the order of the questions/statements (S) in order to increase the reliability of the study by avoiding suggesting answers to the respondents. After collecting and considering comments, together with the experts involved, the management and employees of OPS and PCPR, the final version of the research tool was developed, which took the form of an electronic survey form called *OPS-OpenIndex* and *PCPR-Index*, posted on the server <https://www.google.pl/>. Management and employees received a link to the survey and were asked to complete it. Within 10 working days, a total of 1,959 questionnaires from OPS and 242 from PCPR.

**Table 1.***A summary of the collected statistical data*

	OPS	PCPR
Questionnaires sent	2573	328
Completed questionnaires	1959	242
% of fully completed questionnaires	76.1	75.7

Source: own study.

## 4. Results

The selection of variables and constructs used in the study was based on a synthesis of the literature and grounded in the theoretical assumptions of the New Public Management concept, particularly in relation to managerial autonomy, performance orientation, and accountability mechanisms (Hood, 1991; Lynn, 1998). The purpose of the study within the construct was to determine whether OPS and PCPR managers have clearly defined objectives, to what extent managers are dependent on their superiors in their decision making, and whether the directions of action are consulted with the management. Additionally, an attempt was made to determine the objectivity of the recruitment process and whether characteristics such as charisma are taken into account. Managerial turnover, the form of employment of managers and the extent to which political factors influence their employment were also examined. The position of managers was also asked whether its own vision and directions for the development of the organization. The construct measuring 'managerial management' in OPS and PCPR consisted of eight statements:

- 15. The tasks in the organization are carried out according to clearly defined goals.
- 45. The organization systematically monitors the effectiveness of my actions.
- 25. I have the opportunity to decide how to perform tasks.
- 68. I have a wide range of decision-making powers in the organization.
- 13. I have influence on setting the vision for the organization's development.
- 37. My immediate supervisor commands respect and is an authority figure for me.
- 51. There are frequent changes in management positions in the organization.
- 39. Managers are employed on the basis of employment contracts.

The data collected was exported to *MS Excel* and then subjected to statistical analysis in *Statistica 13*. The following statistical tools were used:

- *Cronbach's  $\alpha$*  coefficient to assess reliability.
- *Cramér's  $V$*  coefficient to examine the relationship between qualitative variables.
- *Kendall's tau* coefficient to assess the correlation between respondents' answers to statements.

- A test probability value ( $p$ ) of less than 0.05 provided grounds for rejecting the null hypothesis. The strength of the relationship was then examined using the *Cramer V* coefficient. The latter takes values from 0 to 1 from a two-tailed interval. The higher its value, the stronger the relationship between the variables. The construct 'managerial management' is reliable, as confirmed by *Cronbach's alpha* coefficient of 0.79.

## OPS results

The distribution of the responses of the OPS respondents is presented in Table 2 and graphically in Figure 1.

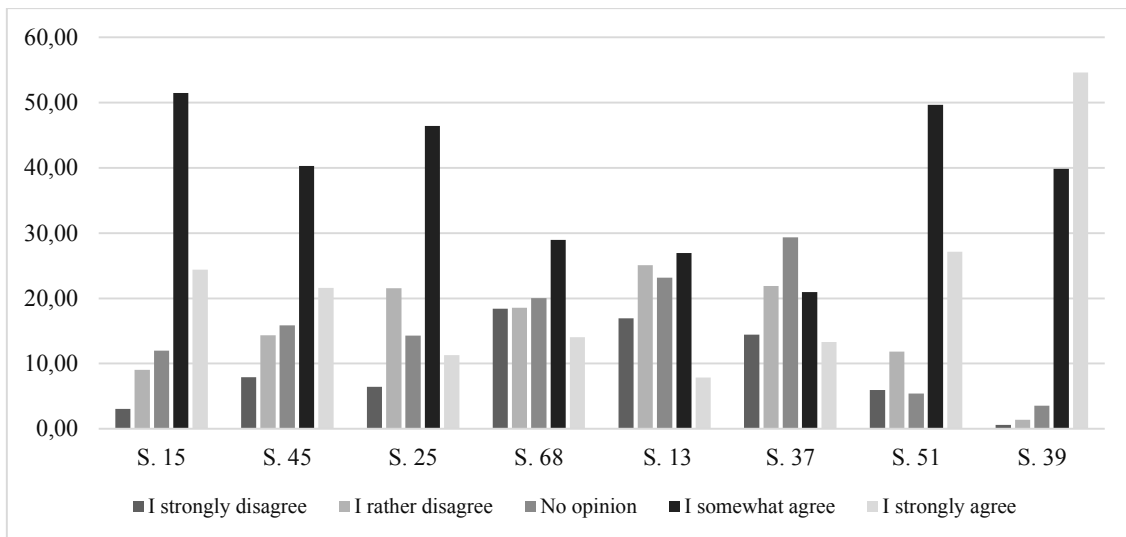
**Table 2.**

*Responses of OPS respondents within the 'managerial management' (in %, N = 1959)*

Specification	S. 15	S. 45	S. 25	S. 68	S. 13	S. 37	S. 51	S. 39
Strongly disagree	3.06	7.91	6.43	18.43	16.95	14.45	5.92	0.61
I rather disagree	9.04	14.34	21.54	18.58	25.06	21.90	11.84	1.38
No opinion	12.00	15.88	14.29	20.01	23.18	29.35	5.41	3.52
I somewhat agree	51.51	40.28	46.45	28.94	26.95	20.98	49.67	39.87
Strongly agree	24.40	21.59	11.28	14.04	7.86	13.32	27.16	54.62

Source: own study based on research results.

A summary analysis of the survey results showed that 51.51% of the respondents moderately agreed with Statement 15, indicating that tasks in the organization are carried out according to clearly defined objectives. Significantly less agreement was observed on whether the organization systematically monitors the effectiveness of the respondent's activities (statement 45), which was moderately confirmed by 40.28% of respondents. Respondents expressed opinions that confirm that they have the opportunity to decide on the method of task implementation (statement 25). This relationship was moderately confirmed by 46.45% of the surveyed group, but the opposite relationship was expressed by 21.54% of the respondents. It is debatable whether the respondents have a wide range of decision-making power in the organization (statement 68). The answers to this statement varied, with 28.94% of the respondents agreeing to a moderate extent and 18.58% disagreeing. The aggregated results of the survey did not clearly indicate whether employees have an influence in setting the vision for the organization's development (statement 13). This was moderately confirmed by 26.95% of the group and moderately denied by 25.06% of the respondents. Respondents expressed mixed opinions about their immediate superiors, and 29.35% of them not specifying whether their superiors command respect and authority (statement 37). Similar results were obtained for contradictory responses.



**Figure 1.** Responses of OPS respondents within the ‘managerial management’ construct (in %, N = 1959).

Source: own study based on research results.

49.67% of the respondents expressed moderate agreement that there are frequent changes in managerial positions in the organization (statement 51), which was strongly confirmed by 27.16%. There was complete agreement on Statement 39, with 94.49% of respondents moderately and strongly confirming that managers are employed on the basis of employment contracts.

The construct contained 8 statements, hence the range of possible results was between 8 and 40. The descriptive statistics obtained for OPS are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3.**

*Descriptive statistics for the ‘managerial management’ construct in the OPS sample*

N valid	Mean aytm.	Median	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Standard deviation
1959	27.82	28.00	8.00	40.00	32.00	5.73

Source: own study based on research results.

The minimum and maximum responses coincided with the boundaries of the construct. The mean and median were similar, at 27.82 and 28.0, respectively. The standard deviation was 5.73. A moderately strong, positive and statistically significant correlation was found between responses to statements 13 and 25. *Kendall's tau* coefficient was 0.44, and (*p*) was below 0.05. This means that respondents who claimed to have an influence on setting the organization's development vision generally expressed the opinion that they had the opportunity to decide on the choice of how to perform their tasks. A moderately strong, positive, and statistically significant correlation was also found, with *p* below 0.05 and *tau* equal to 0.4, between statements 15 and 51. People who believed that tasks were performed in the organization according to clearly defined goals expressed the opinion that there were frequent changes in management positions in the organization. The relationship between statements 68 and 13 was positive, moderately strong (*tau* coefficient = 0.4) and statistically significant (*p* < 0.05).

Respondents who believed that they had a wide range of decision-making power in the organization felt that they had an influence on setting the vision for the organization's development.

The summary results of the study indicate that 50.0% of respondents over 26 and 20.0% aged up to 25 years of age agreed with Statement 15 (tasks in the organization are carried out according to clearly defined goals). The relationship is statistically significant ( $p = 0.00$ ) and weak (*Cramer's V* = 0.07). The relationship between the length of service and their answers was statistically insignificant. As for the fact that the organization systematically monitors the effectiveness of my activities (statement 45), 50.0% of respondents with up to 2 years of service and 33.0% with the longest length of service agreed to a moderate extent. The relationship is statistically significant ( $p = 0.03$ ) and weak (*Cramer's V* = 0.06). The relationship between the age of the respondents and their responses was statistically insignificant.

### PCPR results

The distribution of the responses from the PCPR respondents is presented in Table 4 and Figure 2. The construct is reliable, as confirmed by *Cronbach's alpha* coefficient of 0.76.

**Table 4.**

*Responses of PCPR respondents within the 'managerial management' construct (in %, N = 242)*

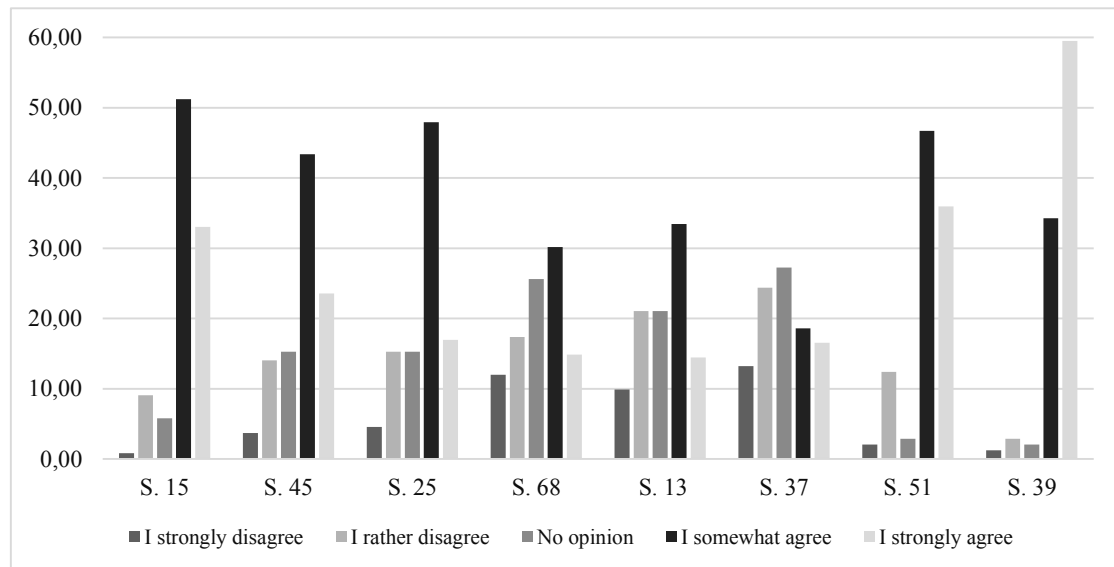
Specification	S. 15	S. 45	S. 25	S. 68	S. 13	S. 37	S. 51	S. 39
Strongly disagree	0.83	3.72	4.55	11.98	9.92	13.22	2.07	1.24
I rather disagree	9.09	14.05	15.29	17.36	21.07	24.38	12.40	2.89
No opinion	5.79	15.29	15.29	25.62	21.07	27.27	2.89	2.07
I somewhat agree	51.24	43.39	47.93	30.17	33.47	18.60	46.69	34.30
Strongly agree	33.06	23.55	16.94	14.88	14.46	16.53	35.95	59.50

Source: own study based on research results.

A summary analysis of the results of the PCPR survey shows that 51.24% of respondents expressed moderate agreement that tasks in the organization are carried out according to clearly defined objectives (statement 15), which was strongly confirmed by 33.06% of the respondents. The aggregated responses show that the organization systematically monitors the effectiveness of respondents' activities (statement 45). 43.39% of the group agreed with this statement to a moderate extent and 23.55% of respondents agreed strongly.

The aggregate assessment of statement 25 indicates that 47.93% of the respondents moderately agreed that they have the opportunity to decide how to perform their tasks. Only 4.55% of them strongly disagreed with this statement. PCPR respondents did not express clear opinions on whether they have a wide range of decision-making power in the organization (statement 68). Although 30.17% moderately confirmed this, 25.62% were unable to determine it and another 17.36% disagreed.

33.47% of the respondents moderately confirmed that they have an influence on setting the vision for the organization's development (statement 13), while 21.07% were unable to determine this and moderately disagreed with it. In this case, the respondents expressed their ambivalent attitude towards their immediate superiors (statement 37). The respondents did not express clear opinions on whether their superiors inspire respect and are an authority; 27.27% confirmed this relationship.



**Figure 2.** Responses of PCPR respondents within the 'managerial management' construct (in %, N = 242).

Source: own study based on research results.

46.69% of the respondents moderately agreed with the statement (51) that there are frequent changes in managerial positions in their organization, and more than 35.95% of the respondents strongly agreed with this statement. The employment of managers on the basis of employment contracts (statement 39) was confirmed by 93.8% of respondents. The descriptive statistics obtained for PCPR are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5.**

*Descriptive statistics for the construct 'managerial management' in the PCPR sample*

N valid	Arithmetic mean	Median	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Standard deviation
242	29.24	29.00	14.00	40.00	26.00	5.35

Source: own study based on research results.

The minimum response within the PCPR construct was 6 points higher than its lower limit. The mean and median were 29.0, and the standard deviation was 5.35. A moderately strong, positive (*Kendall's tau* coefficient = 0.41) and statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) correlation was found between statements 13 and 45, which means that people who believed that they had influence on setting the vision for the development expressed the opinion that the organization systematically monitored the effectiveness of their activities. The relationship between

statements 15 and 45 was moderately strong, positive (Kendall *tau* coefficient = 0.45) and statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). Those who maintained that tasks in the organization are carried out according to clearly defined goals generally agreed that the organization systematically monitors the effectiveness of their activities. A not very strong, positive (*tau* coefficient = 0.38) and statistically significant correlation ( $p < 0.05$ ) was also found between statements 25 and 15. This shows that respondents who believed that tasks in the organization were carried out according to clearly defined objectives often expressed the opinion that they had the opportunity to decide how to carry out their tasks.

## 5. Discussion

The findings of this study should be interpreted in the context of existing research on public management and managerial roles. Previous studies have emphasized the importance of managerial autonomy and performance orientation; however, they often rely on theoretical models or limited empirical evidence (Pollitt, Bouckaert, 2011; Entwistle, 2021). One of the key limitations of earlier research is the insufficient consideration of institutional constraints and political dependencies that affect managerial behavior in practice. The present study contributes new empirical insights by demonstrating that, despite the formal adoption of New Public Management principles, significant deficits remain in terms of decision-making autonomy and strategic influence of managers in social welfare organizations. These findings extend existing knowledge by highlighting the discrepancy between normative models of management and their practical implementation. The results have important implications for the broader field of public management, suggesting the need to redesign governance frameworks to better balance control and autonomy. The knowledge generated by this study can be used to inform policy reforms, improve managerial training programs, and support the development of more effective and responsive social welfare systems.

The study within the ‘managerial management’ was intended to determine whether OPS and PCPR managers are capable of clearly formulating goals and tasks and enforcing their achievement. An attempt was made to determine whether managers have the authority to choose how tasks are performed. The results of the study within the construct of ‘managerial management’ in OPS and PCPR were to assess: (1) the transparency of defined objectives; (2) the degree of decision-making autonomy; (3) the degree of dependence on superiors; (4) influence on the vision of the organization's development; (5) the charisma of managers; (6) the frequency of changes in managerial positions; (7) forms of employment of managers. Table 6 presents the verification of the hypotheses and the suggestions for improvements in specific areas.

**Table 6.**

*Identified problems and proposed solutions within the organizational systems of OPS and PCPR – verification of the adopted hypotheses*

Hypothesis	Verification	Solution
H1: Managers are dependent on their superiors in decision making.	Confirmed	Strengthening of managers' autonomy, manifested in the absence of the need to consult decisions with local authorities in exchange for submitting periodic reports on activities carried out.
H2: Organization's courses of action are consulted with managers.	Rejected	Consultation of social problem-solving strategies with social welfare managers.
H3: Charisma is taken into account when selecting candidates for managerial positions.	Rejected	Selection of managers who, in addition to their qualifications, have an impeccable reputation in the local community, are highly qualified, and have good personal skills.
H4: Managers are employed on the basis of employment contracts, not management contracts.	Confirmed	Increased awareness among local authorities of the legitimacy of using flexible forms of employment for social welfare managers (employment in individually negotiated management contracts).

Source: own study based on research results.

Deficits in 'managerial management' at OPS were identified, namely: (1) lack of broad decision-making powers in the organization, approximately 18.5% moderately and strongly agreed with this conclusion, taking into account the size of the research group and the fact that not only managers participated in the study, the sum of the responses should be classified as a negative phenomenon; (2) lack of influence on setting the vision for the organization's development, moderately confirmed by 25% of respondents; (3) managers are not authority figures for employees, 29.35% of respondents were unable to clearly define this, which allows for a negative conclusion to be drawn; (4) managers are employed on the basis of employment contracts, with almost 95% of respondents confirming this relationship. The dysfunctions identified within the construct of 'managerial management' for PCPR include: (1) lack of broad decision-making power in organizations, which was moderately confirmed by 30.2% of respondents, while 1/4 were unable to determine this; (2) lack of influence on setting the vision for the organization's development, which was confirmed by over 40% of respondents; (3) supervisors do not command respect and are not an authority for 27.3% of respondents; (4) the employment of managers on the basis of employment contracts was confirmed by almost 95% of respondents.

The results of this study are consistent with prior research indicating that the implementation of New Public Management principles often remains incomplete and constrained by institutional and political factors (Hood, 1991; Pollitt, Bouckaert, 2011). In particular, the identified limitations in managerial autonomy and decision-making power confirm earlier observations that public sector managers operate within hybrid governance structures, combining elements of managerialism with administrative control (Hood, Dixon, 2015; Bovaird, Loeffler, 2024). At the same time, the findings extend the literature by providing empirical evidence that the shift toward results-oriented management, emphasized in previous studies (Lynn, 1998; Berman, 2025), is not fully supported by corresponding changes in

organizational practices. The study also highlights the discrepancy between the theoretical assumptions of 'managerial management' and their practical implementation in social welfare organizations, which has been previously suggested but insufficiently empirically verified (Entwistle, 2021; Hartley, 2025). This confirms that, despite reforms, public managers continue to face structural constraints that limit their ability to perform strategic and leadership roles effectively. However, the study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the research is limited to the Polish context, which may reduce the generalizability of the findings to other institutional settings. Second, the use of self-reported survey data may introduce response bias and affect the objectivity of the results. Third, although the PAR approach enhances practical relevance, it may also limit the level of standardization and comparability typical of purely quantitative studies.

## 6. Summary

Social welfare managers should use models taken from business: plan, introduce innovations and new solutions, and be creative in carrying out tasks. Based on a review of the literature and analysis of the research results, it can be concluded that the effectiveness of social welfare systems is not possible without a transformation of the roles of social welfare managers in response to the dynamic environment that determines social problems. Managers should present their vision through a broad view of social problems, anticipate, and build visions for the practical application of scientific achievements, as well as enter new areas of interpersonal relations by undertaking new ventures and contributing to the building of trust, which is an important element of social capital. In the classic model, the manager performs all of Mintzberg's roles in a relatively balanced manner, with interpersonal and informational roles supporting decision-making roles. On the contrary, in the modern approach to public service management, the manager becomes primarily a results manager, which strengthens the decision-making roles. Social welfare managers should be given greater operational autonomy, but at the same time be subject to greater accountability for achieving measurable results.

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