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INTERNAL ORGANISATIONAL FACTORS INFLUENCING CREATIVITY AS A DETERMINANT OF EFFECTIVE EMPOWERMENT

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Purpose: Identifying the levels of empowerment used in practice and the associated factors influencing creative attitudes.
Methodology: The primary research method is a questionnaire survey. The research is of a pilot nature and is being conducted on a small sample.
Findings: The organisational units of the companies surveyed offer a conducive environment for creativity, though this potential is not being fully utilised when it comes to delegating decisions and responsibility. In terms of empowerment, the prevailing approach is one where the manager makes the decision, either after consulting others (25%) or without consulting them (24%).
Research limitations: One limitation is the small sample size and the significant proportion of young people aged 25 or under. Future research into empowerment and creativity should also take into account the size of the enterprise and the source of its capital.
Practical implications: Research reveals that, from the perspective of internal conditions for creativity, companies are ready to adopt mature forms of empowerment, although this is not generally practised.
Originality/value: The originality of this study lies in its attempt to explore the relationship between empowerment and the factors associated with this phenomenon in the field of creativity.
Keywords: creativity, empowerment, development, autonomy, leadership.
Category of the paper: Research paper.

1. Introduction

Effective empowerment involves delegating responsibility and decision-making authority to employees in line with the scope of their duties. This process involves a psychological burden and requires up-to-date skills; therefore, effective empowerment should provide both psychological and skills-based support. Employees' willingness to take on responsibility is

directly dependent on the existence of such support. Empowerment is therefore not limited solely to managers delegating responsibility, but also encompasses systemic organisational solutions (e.g. training, kaizen) and employees' readiness to make decisions. Consequently, effective empowerment is based on a triad: manager – systemic support – employee.

From a management perspective, empowerment should mean creating conditions in which employees feel encouraged to engage in the decision-making process and to carry out tasks independently, from the initial idea through to the evaluation of its implementation. Such an approach will influence their perception of their impact on the work they perform, which in turn will translate into their self-esteem, competence development, creativity and motivation (Łuszczyńska, 2018, p. 31). H. Czubasiewicz and R. Ronowicz point out (2022, p. 164) the validity of seeking links between the development of internal organisational solutions and the development of incentive systems and the building of a sense of security among employees, as this promotes the implementation of the concept of empowerment. In this context, it becomes important to provide systematic support to employees. This may manifest itself in a preference for teamwork and a focus on encouraging development and independence, as changes in corporate structures increasingly require members of the organisation to perform their roles in a more independent, creative and innovative manner. In particular, the transition to project-based or process-based structures demands that employees demonstrate independence and creativity in problem-solving. It is suggested that these qualities stem from their intellectual potential as well as their attitudes and behaviours, whilst being dependent on the employee's motivation, commitment and job satisfaction. Furthermore, the introduction of empowerment within an organisation also requires the use of participatory management techniques, based on access to knowledge and effective communication. F. Yilmaz (2019, p. 968) also highlights the link between empowerment and providing employees with organisational support and building trust.

In this study, we focus on the importance of creativity, considering it as a key determinant of empowerment. B. Jamka (2018, p. 85) writes that the role of creativity in shaping the economy of the future is highlighted in contemporary academic and public discourse through terms such as the knowledge-based economy, the conceptual era, the economy of creativity, and the creative economy. We agree with P. Graciano and colleagues (2023, p. 2) that creativity is a multidimensional construct that integrates cognitive abilities, environmental influences and motivational factors to generate new and useful solutions. T. Amabile and M. Pratt (2016, p. 160) point out that it is shaped by social and organisational contexts, in which leadership and culture play a fundamental role in either fostering or inhibiting creative potential.

If this is the case, the organisation should provide creative employees with an environment that supports their activities and the implementation of new ideas. Combining employees' skills with an organisational culture that fosters creativity is the foundation for achieving synergy in relation to the intended work outcomes (Baranowska, Waszkiewicz, 2022, p. 27).

2. Empowerment

Empowerment is a concept whose principles boil down to providing employees with the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes, delegating authority and responsibility for their work, but also ensuring they have the opportunity to acquire and develop knowledge, abilities and skills. It can therefore be said that it represents a development of earlier theoretical trends in management studies, such as participatory management or job enrichment (Pytel-Kopczyńska, 2019, p. 513).

The literature discusses two dimensions of empowerment. The first treats it as an employee's motivational state, the second as a management style. In the first case, it concerns the employee's beliefs regarding their own position, influence, competencies, the meaning of their work and autonomy, which, as emphasised, strengthens their sense of professional efficacy. The second refers to managerial practices that involve sharing power, resources and information with employees, and involving them in decision-making (Fernandez, Moldogaziev, 2013, p. 496).

G. Spreitzer (2008, p. 18) argues that empowerment boosts work productivity because it enables employees to move beyond rigidly defined roles and responsibilities, undertaking more innovative activities. Stankevičienė and co-authors (2019, p. 375) also highlight its positive aspects, noting that it provides employees with autonomy, which helps to reveal their talents, enables the effective use of their skills, stimulates the acquisition of new knowledge and skills, and fosters initiative and creativity. H. Ganjinia and colleagues (2013, p. 2431) suggest that employees who work in an environment where they have greater freedom of action are more inclined to accept organisational changes, engage in continuous improvement, achieve and exceed organisational goals, and make independent decisions.

Much research into employees' innovative behaviour is conducted from the perspective of their personality traits and predispositions; however, A. Zuraik and colleagues (2020, p. 1480) highlighted the influence and significance of external situational factors. They note that leadership plays a significant role in corporate innovation. Leadership style and management practices can directly or indirectly influence employees, encouraging them to demonstrate creative and innovative behaviour. Through empowerment, managers can make employees feel supported and valued by the company, which will translate into innovative behaviour. It is therefore crucial to examine how to improve employees' innovative behaviour from a leadership perspective.

3. Creativity and its determinants

Creativity is defined in various ways, and it is not easy to provide a clear and unambiguous definition of the concept. It is associated with the ability to create something new and sought-after; it is equated with solving problems in a creative, yet competent and original manner; it is the ability to propose ideas that are not only innovative but also useful (Sołoducho-Pelc, 2018, p. 27).

Creativity and innovation are determined, on the one hand, by employees' personal traits, and on the other, can be shaped by appropriate organisational measures. The personal traits that foster innovative and creative behaviour are, above all: curiosity, imagination, a high level of intellectual ability, courage, a willingness to challenge the status quo, and a high degree of self-motivation. However, without developing appropriate management methods, such as collaboration, communication and development, achieving the set goals may prove difficult. Measures taken for the benefit of employees, organisational conditions and the working environment often shape their potential for creative and innovative activities. Within these factors, empowerment and the improvement of organisational solutions consistent with the idea of empowerment are of significant importance (Grajewski, Czubasiewicz, 2018, p. 154).

The growing demand for innovation, driven by organisations' desire to stand out in the market, necessitates the constant generation of new ideas. New or improved products or services are created thanks to the creativity of employees. Consequently, creativity is very often seen as a trait that significantly enhances a candidate's value and is crucial in the recruitment process (Samuel-Idzikowska, 2017, p. 46). This stems from the fact that creativity is an essential element of the innovation process, yet it does not in itself guarantee the emergence of innovation. Only a pro-innovation attitude – that is, a readiness to implement ideas – allows creative ideas to be transformed into concrete solutions. Therefore, traditional management, based on performance monitoring and data analysis, is insufficient. An approach that supports innovation and the creative engagement of employees becomes essential. Creativity should be an integral part of the management process, as it is precisely this that enables organisations to develop productively (Brzozowska et al., 2025, p. 52).

The effective harnessing of employees' creativity, the development of creative thinking skills among managers, and the implementation of methods that encourage the generation of innovative ideas can lead to the establishment of an integrated system of creative and innovative processes. Such a system will enable the continuous integration of scientific progress with production practice and market realities, which in turn will intensify the organisation's innovative development and allow for the effective resolution of complex management problems (Hrabovska, 2025, p. 110). In the text, the Harvard referencing style should be used (Smith, 2017) or (Smith, Bradley, 2017). In the case of more than three authors, write the surname of the first author and add the abbreviation "et al." (Bradley et al., 2017).

4. Methodology

The study involved 84 respondents enrolled on part-time courses at the University of Economics in Wrocław. Consequently, the sample included a high proportion of young people aged under 25 (71%) and those aged between 25 and 40 (27%). The study can therefore be considered to be of a survey nature. A questionnaire method was used to conduct the research. The research was carried out using the Forms application.

In our study, we used J. Appelo's scale to measure the level of empowerment. Respondents rated the following statements (2016, p. 136):

- The manager makes decisions and announces them to staff (according to J. Apello, this is not empowerment) – Level 1: „Tell".
- The manager makes decisions but tries to persuade staff to accept them by 'selling' them the idea – Level 2: „Sell".
- Before making a decision, the manager asks for their employees' opinions, considers them whilst making it clear that they are the one who makes the final decision – Level 3: „Consult".
- The manager invites employees to a joint discussion and encourages them to reach a consensus. Every voice counts equally – Level 4: „Agree".
- The manager tries to influence employees by sharing their opinion, but the final decisions are made by the employees – Level 5: „Advise".
- The manager allows employees to decide first, suggesting that it would be a nice, though not necessarily essential, gesture to inform him – level 6: „Inquire".
- The manager allows the team to take charge of the 'whole matter', whilst he is free to, for example, manage the system as a whole (strategic actions) – level 7: „Delegate".

Respondents also provided assessments relating to creativity, which, as noted above, we regard as an important determinant of empowerment. To this end, we formulated the following questions (statements):

- Does the manager encourage staff to suggest new ideas and improvements? (Question1).
- Does the manager favour new solutions over 'the usual approach'? (Question2).
- Are staff's new ideas not only listened to, but also actually put into practice? (Question3).
- Are mistakes made when implementing new ideas treated as an opportunity to learn, rather than as grounds for punishment? (Question 4).
- Are there opportunities within the team to jointly create and develop ideas? (Question 5).
- Does the manager recognise and reward innovative ideas or improvements? (Question6).

- Is there an atmosphere of trust and openness within the team, encouraging the free expression of even bold ideas? (Question 7).
- Are there specific measures in place within the organisation to support creativity? (Question 8).

5. Results

The research yielded the results discussed below. Table 1 presents the responses to the question concerning leadership behaviour according to Appelo. As can be seen, the majority of responses—around 50%—relate to decisions made by the leader, whether or not these were preceded by consultation.

Table 1
Survey results on leadership behaviour according to Appelo

Line labels	**Your leader's behaviour**	
Level 1: „Speak”	20	24%
Level 2: „Sell”	4	5%
Level 6: „Inquire”	5	6%
Level 7: „Delegate”	5	6%
Level 5: „Advise”	1	1%
Level 3: „Consult”	21	25%
Level 4: „Negotiate”	17	20%
Various	11	13%
Final total	84	100%

Source: Own work.

Figure 1 shows a visual representation of the research results presented in Table 1.

Table 2 summarises the responses regarding the internal determinants of creativity.

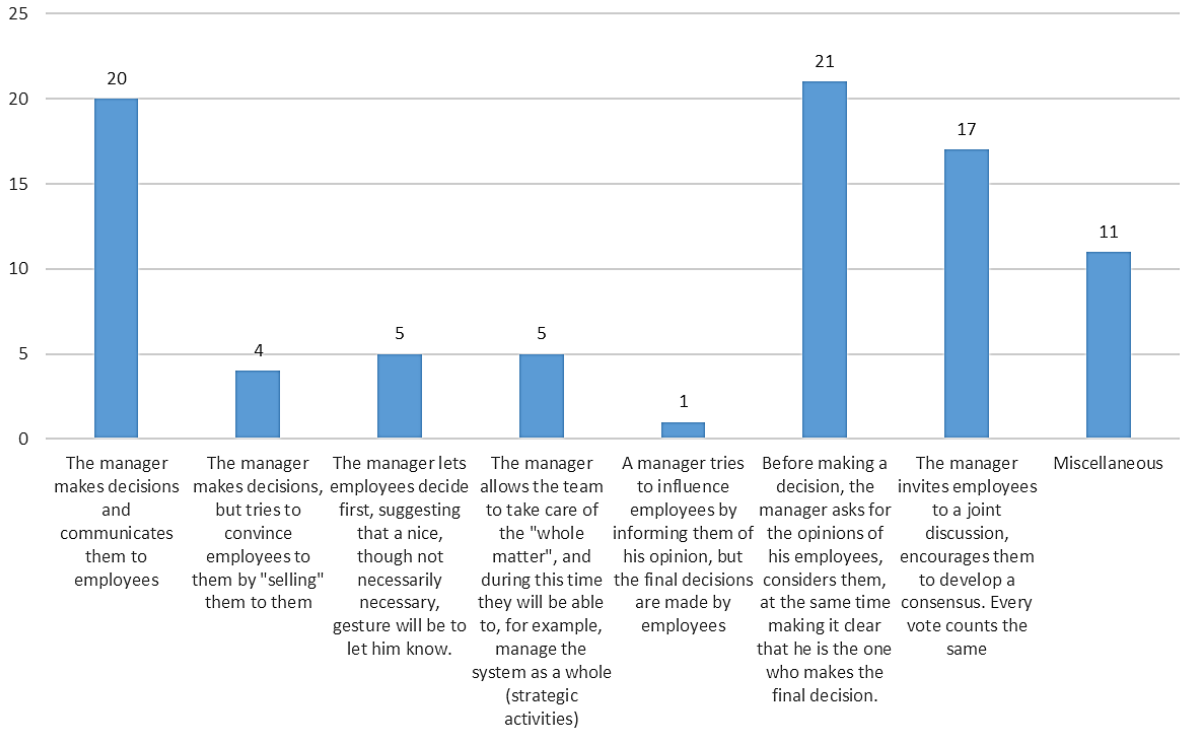

Figure 1. Results of the survey on the behavior of a leader according to Appelo.

Source: Own work.

Table 2.

Answers regarding the factors influencing creativity.

	Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4	Question 5	Question 6	Question 7	Question 8
NO	16	26	31	23	27	36	20	53
	19%	31%	37%	27%	32%	43%	24%	63%
YES	68	58	53	61	57	48	64	31
	81%	69%	63%	73%	68%	57%	76%	37%

Source: Own work.

As many as 81% of respondents indicate that managers encourage new approaches. However, only in 31 (37%) cases are there systemic measures in place to promote creativity, such as time for experimentation, ideation spaces, hackathons and innovation labs.

An important finding is that 76% of respondents state that their organisational unit has an atmosphere of openness and trust.

It can be said that the units provide suitable conditions for creativity, though this is not fully utilised when it comes to delegating responsibility. In terms of empowerment, the prevailing approach is one where the manager makes the decision, which they may or may not consult on. In some cases (20%), decisions are made by consensus, where every voice counts equally. In this instance, we can already speak of a significant step towards delegating responsibility and decision-making. Figure 2 is a graphical representation of the information contained in Table 2.

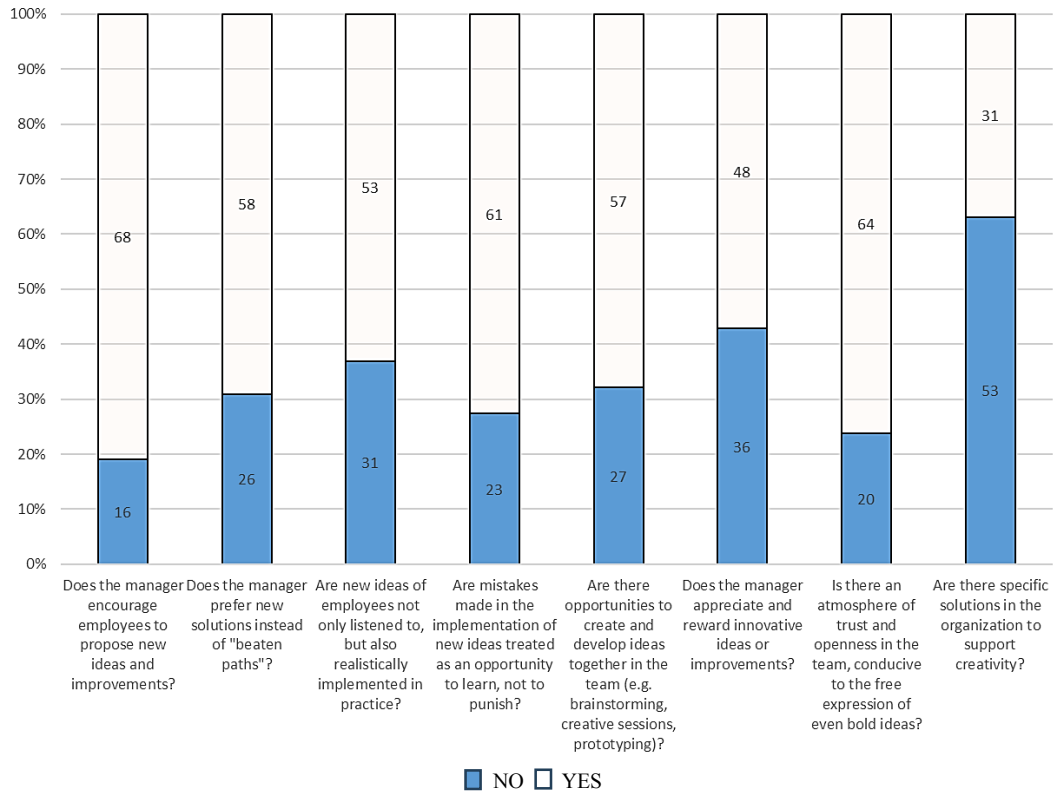

Figure 2. Answers about the determinants of creativity.

Source: Own work.

6. Discussion

In our research, we have identified that:

- Before making a decision, the manager seeks the views of their staff (25%).
- The manager invites staff to join in a discussion and encourages them to reach a consensus (20%).
- The manager makes decisions and informs staff of them (24%).

As can be seen, therefore, these findings do not allow for an unequivocally positive or negative assessment of empowerment practices.

H. Czubasiewicz and R. Ronowicz (2022, pp. 167, 172) also investigated, amongst other things, the level of empowerment among employees. Their research indicates that 86% of the employees surveyed report positive, highly favourable indicator values, which confirm their sense of influence, commitment and agency regarding day-to-day matters related to company management. The authors point to a high level of empowerment maturity at the stable/adaptive level (level 2+/level 3-) on a four-point scale. They therefore assume that the surveyed employees are ready for change and for advancing to increasingly higher levels of process

maturity within the organisation. The areas of empowerment rated most positively were: the scope of innovation and creativity, the development of competencies, and the contribution to the final outcome of the project.

When analysing question 1, 'Does the manager encourage employees to propose new ideas and improvements?', and question 3, 'Are employees' new ideas not only listened to but also actually put into practice?', it should be noted that the research findings presented in the literature are not conclusive. In the study by M. Pawłowski and colleagues (2017, p. 158), we read that 79% of respondents stated that they had an influence on the performance of their professional duties, whilst 11% of respondents gave a negative answer. The researchers indicate that employees who experience autonomy in the decision-making process and opportunities for professional development perform their duties more effectively, both individually and as part of a team. In the same study, 76% of respondents stated that they were ready to participate in the decision-making process, which, as the researchers indicate, means that these employees will show initiative in making strategic and tactical decisions. Furthermore, in the research by M. Rabhi and colleagues (2024, p. 153) indicates that the team leader expresses confidence in the team's ability to achieve its goals (the highest among the means, with an arithmetic mean of 3.1944 and a standard deviation of 1.19434). The researchers explain this by the fact that the manager effectively influences team members, strengthening their position and encouraging them to take the initiative, rather than limiting their contribution to decision-making.

Meanwhile, a study by D. Socha and N. Ćwikowski (2024, p. 38) reveals that over 60% of respondents feel they have no influence over decisions affecting their work. In light of these findings, the researchers propose increasing employee participation in the decision-making process, as this may have a positive impact on employee engagement.

The next question assessed was: 'Does the manager prefer new approaches rather than "well-trodden paths"?' (question 2). In this context, B. Jamka (2018, p. 89) highlights time as a significant factor. Time pressure and stress promote the release of adrenaline, which triggers rapid thinking based on established patterns of behaviour. Conversely, a safe, calm environment promotes the release of oxytocin, which activates the areas of the brain responsible for cooperation. The working environment therefore influences employees' ways of thinking and behaving. Companies focused on intense competition do not foster creativity, as it requires slow and reflective thinking. In contrast, working in diverse teams encourages the integration of different knowledge resources and ways of thinking, increasing the likelihood of synergy in terms of creativity and innovation. K. Kozioł-Nadolna (2020, p. 9) examined the role of leadership in fostering innovation within an organisation. She points out that leaders rated statements highest regarding, amongst other things, openness to new ideas and ways of working, encouraging employees to collaborate within a group and build cross-departmental networks, promoting innovative behaviour amongst employees, and encouraging them to express their own ideas. The study also revealed that those employed by leaders are perceived as individuals who can make a significant contribution to the company's development.

According to the author, the results show that leaders highly value their role in stimulating innovative activity. They are open to new ideas, encourage employees to express them, and promote innovative behaviour among staff. Equally important is the recognition of teamwork and group collaboration as factors that stimulate innovation.

The next question assessed was question 4: 'Are mistakes made when implementing new ideas treated as an opportunity to learn, rather than as grounds for punishment?'. Here, too, high scores were recorded. This is entirely consistent with the research of many authors in the field of innovation. They point to the necessity of experimentation and a readiness to accept failure, from which new knowledge is derived (Gaynor, 2002, p. 25).

Question 5 asked: "Are there opportunities within the team to jointly generate and develop ideas?" Here too, we recorded high levels of agreement among respondents. Similarly, M. Rabhi and colleagues (2024, p. 154) present high scores from respondents regarding the statement "we work in an atmosphere that fosters cooperation among team members" in their research. This variable achieved the highest value among the averages, with an arithmetic mean of 3.0972 and a standard deviation of 1.17677. The researchers explain this by the fact that the environment in which the team operates is supportive in nature, which consequently increases the group's effectiveness, enables the exchange of experiences and opinions, and their integration to create creative solutions and options that contribute to improving decision-making processes.

Question 6 asked: "Does the manager value and reward innovative ideas or improvements?". In their study, M. Rabhi and co-authors (2024, p. 154) point out, somewhat alarmingly, that there were relatively lower scores for the statement "The organisation values our team's achievements". An analysis of the results points to significant implications for management and research, highlighting the need to develop effective mechanisms to stimulate innovation within organisations. Leadership plays a key role in the development of innovative behaviour, which it can effectively reinforce through appropriate actions and roles. Incentive mechanisms such as promotion, pay rises or the opportunity to manage innovative projects foster innovation. It is also important to foster attitudes that encourage initiative and responsibility, not only among formal leaders but also among employees. The role of a leader should primarily be to support the development and self-fulfilment of employees, which is of particular importance in the context of digital transformation requiring technological competencies (Kozioł-Nadolna, 2020, p. 15).

We also recorded high scores for question 7, which asked: "Is there an atmosphere of trust and openness within the team that encourages the free expression of even bold ideas?" J. Dzieńdziora and M. Smolarek (2016, p. 66) conducted research into factors that may have a demotivating effect on employees. Alongside factors such as remuneration inadequate for the work performed, job insecurity, rivalry with colleagues, conflicts, stress, and a lack of opportunities for professional development and promotion, they noted a lack of trust and the

exertion of pressure and coercion by superiors, as well as a lack of a say in matters concerning the organisation.

M. Dankiewicz (2016, p. 250) presents research suggesting that Poland is characterised by a culture of mistrust. One of the main problems facing Polish organisations is a lack of internal trust. The research points to a prevailing climate of mistrust: over 30% of managers do not trust their subordinates, and as many as 50% of employees declare a lack of trust in their colleagues. Only about half of those surveyed recognise efforts to build a culture of trust, whilst in many organisations such efforts are not undertaken at all. At the same time, respondents note a link between the climate of trust and team effectiveness as well as job satisfaction.

The final question analysed was: 'Are there specific measures in place within the organisation to support creativity?'. In this context, E. Uzoamaka and colleagues (2015, p. 139) indicate in their research that empowering employees should involve a shift in managerial roles from supervisory to coaching roles. This means that employees should be provided with appropriate information and decision-making authority, and the delegation of tasks itself should be based on clear communication and the setting of realistic goals. It is also important to ensure a proper match of competencies, staff training and a system for motivating employees. It was emphasised that empowerment fosters independent thinking; however, in the absence of appropriate training, it can lead to decision-making chaos and actions inconsistent with the organisation's policy, especially when managers perceive employees' competencies as insufficient.

7. Conclusion

Employees at various levels of management should demonstrate the ability to analyse problems in depth and move beyond formulaic and simplistic solutions. This requires creative thinking, innovative solutions and a willingness to take risks. At the same time, they are expected to demonstrate professionalism in carrying out their tasks, whilst expanding their competencies and scope of decision-making, a process known as empowerment. Its implementation entails changes in organisational authority, access to information and knowledge, and incentive systems, as well as a reduction in supervision by superiors and an increase in employee autonomy and engagement (Brajer-Marczak, 2013, p. 29).

The research indicates that, in most cases, managers of organisational units foster creativity; however, this does not translate into mature empowerment. Managers make decisions independently, often following consultations.

A limitation of the study is the small sample size (84 people) and the significant proportion of young people in the sample – those aged 25 or under (71%). Further research should focus on the remaining internal determinants of empowerment. It is also necessary to examine the issue of mpowerment in the context of enterprise classes and the origin of capital.

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