

A PERSPECTIVE ON THE BENEFITS OF DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT IN ORGANIZATIONS

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Abstract: One of the basic steps to making a business case for diversity is to understand what diversity means in the workplace and what benefits it brings. Also, proper implementation of practices for an inclusive work environment requires making managers aware of the potential benefits of diversity management. Accordingly, the article presents the results of a survey of organizational representatives on the benefits of implementing diversity management concepts. The analytical part of the article is based on the results of a survey of 1,076 representatives of large, medium and small companies located in Poland which was carried out before the COVID pandemic. Knowledge of the diversity management concept and awareness of its benefits were analyzed at the level of the entire group, as well as in a crosssection of companies by size. The analytical part of the article used selected modified multicriteria decision-making methods for ordinal data. The adoption of an analytical approach also made it possible to identify the most important benefits that representatives of small, medium and large companies believe are a consequence of implementing the concept of diversity management. The survey participants were able to observe a relatively high impact of implementing the diversity management concept on most of the benefits obtained by the organizations detailed in the article. However, the analysis of the correlation matrix clearly indicates that the opinions of representatives of small, medium and large companies operating in Poland on the benefits that diversity management can give to an organization vary. Quite consistent opinions were observed among the surveyed representatives representing large and medium-sized enterprises.

Key words: business diversity, diversity management, organization, work environment, diversity management concept

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Introduction

Although diversity and the concept of diversity management has dominated the literature since the 1980s and is a fairly widespread management approach it is still not a clear and well-defined issue.

As the historical overview shows, in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, organizations dealt with diversity issues involving mainly discrimination based on race and gender (Kornau et al., 2023; Gross-Gołacka, 2018; Gross-Gołacka, 2016). They guided attention to these activities for three main reasons. First, fear - it was feared that social unrest would spill over into the workplace. Second, the law - there was a need to follow equal employment opportunity laws and regulations. And, third, ethics there was an expectation to do the right thing - in accordance with the organization's moral and ethical standards and values. It wasn't until the 1980s and 1990s - and the prospect of demographic and economic change - that organizations addressed diversity issues for the sake of profit, innovation rather than fear and ethical values. Although as early as the 1970s and 1980s numerous forward-looking companies recognized the importance of a proactive approach to diversity, it was not until the late 20th century that the concept of diversity management in organizations emerged on a larger scale. Diversity programs began to be viewed as a way to increase organizational effectiveness and competitive advantage more than as a response to legal and moral issues of discrimination (Egan, Bendick, 2008; Ng and Sears, 2020). Today, it should be assumed that an organization's internal and external environment triggers its activity, which should reflect changes in the global (or local) and competitive market. Therefore, it seems that the success and competitiveness of an organization depends on its ability to implement and accept diversity and realize its benefits (Kaur et al., 2020; Kemper et al., 2016; Syed and Özbilgin, 2009; Thomas, 1991). The thesis formulated in this way leads us to believe that today no entity can afford to ignore the diversity aspect of customers, suppliers, shareholders and employees if it wants to build its competitive advantage. A review of the literature reveals that diversity management is an interdisciplinary category that uses several perspectives, namely economic, social and biological. In the literature, diversity is seen as a learning orientation within the framework of inclusive (Liff, 1996; Liff, 1999) and equal opportunity policies (Lorbiecki, 2000). It is based on the assumption that harnessing these differences will create a productive environment where everyone feels valued, where their talents are fully utilized and organizational goals are achieved (Kirton and Green, 2005). Finally, diversity management is presented not only as a rebalancing, but also as an attempt to change the culture of the

organization, fulfilling one of the main criticisms of the dominant liberal approach to equality (Kinicki and Kreitner, 2006; El Emary et al., 2020)

Thus, if diversity is seen as a desirable and appropriate state, organizations must take measures to make the organization's workforce more diverse. On the other hand, if a diverse workforce is seen as a starting point (whether as a result of previous initiatives, (or not), diversity management must answer the question of how to make the workplace as welcoming as possible to this already existing diversity (Kornau et al., 2023; Köllen, 2021).

Far fewer studies have looked at how companies can contribute to the creation and effective management of a diverse workforce. Especially in the central part of Europe (Gibbs et al., 2000). This gap exists even though considerable work on diversity management has identified the impact and benefits of doing so. Therefore, our research question is: what knowledge do managers of small, medium and large companies in Poland have about the benefits of diversity management.

To answer the question, the results of a survey on intellectual capital management and diversity management by companies in Poland were used. The survey was conducted using CATI and CAWI methods on a representative group of 1,067 companies operating in Poland (with at least 10 employees) with an assumed confidence level of 0.95 and an estimation error of 3%. It was based on a proportional selection of enterprises by provinces and their size measured by the number of employees. The assumed structure of the research group also took into account the diversity of enterprises by type of business (the number of interviews conducted was proportional to the share of enterprises in different sections of the PKD). The structure of the research sample was created based on data from the Central Statistical Office as of January 2019. Interviews were conducted with representatives of the management level of the surveyed enterprises.

Certainly, awareness of the potential benefits of the diversity management concept has both educational and promotional value. It is an important piece of knowledge that organizations can manage to build their competitive advantage.

The remainder of this article will begin with a review of the related literature, followed by the objectives of the research. Next, the research method is described and the research results are presented. Finally, the article includes a discussion and conclusions.

Literature Review

Diversity, in its broad definition, can refer to any perceived difference and similarity between people, whether observable or otherwise (the result will be a broad and universal approach). Diversity is understood as a set of characteristics, including all the features that distinguish one person from another (in terms of employees) and their similarities (Bell, 2007; Kandola and Fullerton, 1998; Kirton and Green, 2005; Loden and Rosener, 1991; Mor Barak, 2017; Prasad and Mills, 1997; Thomas, 1991; Thomas, 1999).

Going further, diversity is also defined as "the inclusion of people from different backgrounds, experiences and perspectives to achieve different goals." In addition to including people from different backgrounds and perspectives, diversity in the workplace also means valuing these differences; allowing employees from different groups to feel comfortable at work; promoting an inclusive culture where everyone feels welcome; and creating policies that support both recruitment and retention of underrepresented groups.

Far more often, researchers analyze and address a narrow perspective and refer mainly to cultural aspects, such as gender or race (Herring, 2009). However, this approach is more concerned with the issue of equal employment opportunity (EEO), which is not diversity management. Nevertheless, other dimensions such as age, ethnicity, disability status and religion have gained increasing visibility in recent decades (Mor Barak, 2017, Sabharwal, Levine, D'Agostino, 2018). Diversity includes all possible aspects in which people differ from each other (Thomas, 1991, Thomas, 1999). We think it is worth adding: and/or are similar to each other. Although proponents favoring a narrow perspective argue that diversity considered on the basis of race, ethnicity and gender cannot be understood in the same way as diversity based on function in an organization, ability, etc., it is not possible to understand diversity in the same way. Differences, due to positioning in the organizational structure or gender, can have different effects on a person. It is important to identify the behaviors that can result in discrimination and exclusion of certain social groups in the organization (Neville et al., 2018; Salih et al., 2019; Sawyer et al., 2016). Moreover, if we assume that diversity is a concept that applies to all social groups, it becomes very difficult to identify discriminatory practices.

On the other hand, diversity management is a broad term, and the authors of many publications define this field and its components in different ways (Kirton and Green, 2005; O'Donovan, 2017; Thomas, 1999). Their review allows us to note that diversity management is an interdisciplinary category, using several perspectives - economic, social and biological.

M. Özbilgin and A. Tatli (2008) define diversity management as a management philosophy, which means that diversity in organizations is recognized and valued, with the goal of increasing organizational performance. Egan and Bendick (2008) define diversity management as the systematic and planned creation of programs and procedures to improve interactions between different (by ethnicity, gender and culture) employees in order to make diversity a source of creativity, complementarity and higher organizational effectiveness (...)." In general, diversity management is about using all available talent in an organization, without recourse to ethnocentrism and stereotypes (Gross-Gołacka, 2016). With regard to the employee group: to carry out policies for diversity, while contributing to the growth of innovation and creative activities, reducing any shortage of human resources with specific abilities and improving the quality of service to customers. Approach through strategic management oriented to adapt the organization to the environment (Gidley and Palmer, 2021; Gooderham et al., 2019; Mor Barak, 2017).



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Benefits of Diversity Management in Organizations

The experience of researchers and practitioners so far allows us to note that the implementation of the concept of diversity management brings a number of benefits to the organization. And this in many aspects and dimensions (strategic, tactical and operational). Also, diversity management provides an opportunity to improve the operational performance of the organization in the short and medium term, as well as the strategic assets of the company in the long term. Investments made in the direction of diversity management contribute to the creation and enhancement of human and organizational capital, which today is an important element affecting performance. As Pocztowski (2015) points out, a key role in the context of human resource diversity is to build leadership that is sensitive to cultural (and non-cultural) differences, one that is able to bring together employees from different cultural backgrounds and with different leadership behavior preferences.

Based on a review of the literature on workplace diversity and its management, it can be concluded that diversity contributes not only to organizational outcomes such as productivity, creativity and innovation (European Union, 2013; McKinsey and Company, 2014), but also to group and individual benefits (Ely, Thomas, 2001). Individuals can increase their knowledge by leveraging the experience of other group members.

The accepted business rationale (Ng and Sears, 2020) for undertaking diversity efforts in an organization is that a diverse workforce will yield positive results, such as: a competitive advantage in attracting and retaining the best talent from a diverse pool of employees; creative synergy and resulting organizational productivity; and a more complete understanding of an increasingly diverse marketplace (Gross-Gołacka et al., 2022; Tipper, 2004; Herring, 2017) or reduced staffing shortages and reduced employee turnover are all benefits from a microeconomic perspective (Sonnenschein, 1997). There is a consensus in the literature on the benefits of diversity management for companies. There is, however, some heterogeneity with regard to, for example, size or nature of the business (European Union, 2013, Gross-Gołacka, 2018). For the purpose of this study, the following research questions were formulated: Do small, medium and large companies operating in Poland observe a relatively high impact of diversity management implementation on company performance?; Is there a differentiated perception of the benefits of implementing the diversity management concept in small, medium and large companies operating in Poland?; Do small companies operating in Poland perceive the benefits of implementing diversity management concepts differently from large and mediumsized companies?

Materials and Methods

Materials

The aim of the analysis was to identify and prioritize the benefits of diversity management in organizations. The purpose of the analysis was to identify and prioritize the benefits of diversity management in organizations. The analysis drew

on the opinions of representatives of small, medium and large enterprises (managerial level) located in Poland. The opinions were collected as part of a broader survey entitled "Intellectual capital and diversity management in companies operating in Poland - conditions and challenges" which was carried out at the Łukasiewicz Research Network - ORGMASZ Institute for Organisation and Management in Industry before the COVID pandemic. The survey was conducted using CATI and CAWI methods on a representative group of 1,067 companies operating in Poland (with at least 10 employees) with an assumed confidence level of 0.95 and an estimation error of 3%.

The literature on the subject provides a number of studies and scientific considerations confirming the impact of diversity management on the functioning of the enterprise (Kornau et al., 2023; European Union, 2013; Bell, 2007; Köllen, 2021; Konrad et al., 2016; Jefmański et al., 2021; Mor Barak, 2017). Analysis of this area has allowed us to define the potential key benefits that diversity management can bring to an organization, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Potential benefits for org	ganizations from the diversit	y management
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No.	Benefit
B1	Increase in staff retention
B2	Talent acquisition and retention
B3	Stress reduction
B4	Improving communication among employees
B5	Increase in employee motivation
B6	Increased employee engagement
B7	Less conflicts
B 8	Improve the quality and efficiency of teamwork

Methods

There are uses the Intuitionistic Fuzzy Synthetic Measure (IFSM) for two reference points (ideal reference point and anti-ideal reference point), which enables the ranking of benefits assessed by respondents using a nominal measurement scale. The value of the measure for the *i*-th object is calculated according to the formula:

$$IFSM_i = 1 - \frac{d_i^+}{d^{+-}}$$

where: d_i^+ - distance of *i*-th object from ideal reference point, d^{+-} - distance between ideal and anti-ideal reference points.

The IFSM assumes normalized values in the range [0-1], and the higher the value of the measure, the higher the position in the ranking of the assessed objects. Detailed characteristics of the IFSM with the individual steps of the procedure are presented in the article (Roszkowska et al., 2022).

The IFSM made it possible to rank the benefits based on the opinions of entrepreneurs expressed in the form of three categories: yes, no, I don't know. These

answers were transformed into intuitionistic fuzzy values. The transformation method is presented in detail in the article (Jefmański et al., 2021). The assessments of benefits transformed into intuitionistic fuzzy sets are presented in the Tables 2-4.

	Parameters of intuitionistic fuzzy sets		
Benefits	mi	ni	pi
B1	0.621	0.187	0.192
B2	0.745	0.129	0.126
B3	0.748	0.131	0.120
B4	0.865	0.065	0.070
B5	0.847	0.067	0.085
B6	0.843	0.061	0.097
B7	0.785	0.098	0.117
B8	0.853	0.060	0.088

Table 2. Evaluation of benefits in the group of small enterprises

Table 3. Evaluation of benefits in the group of medium-sized enterprises

Benefits	Parameters of intuitionistic fuzzy sets		
Denents	mi	ni	pi
B1	0.583	0.179	0.238
B2	0.781	0.106	0.113
B3	0.715	0.139	0.146
B4	0.815	0.093	0.093
B5	0.815	0.099	0.086
B6	0.808	0.060	0.132
B7	0.715	0.152	0.132
B8	0.821	0.086	0.093

Table 4. Evaluation of benefits in a group of large enterprises

Benefits	Parame	ters of intuitionistic fu	izzy sets
Denents	mi	ni	pi
B1	0.409	0.182	0.409
B2	0.682	0.091	0.227
B3	0.545	0.182	0.273
B4	0.727	0.136	0.136
B5	0.818	0.045	0.136
B6	0.727	0.045	0.227
B7	0.591	0.091	0.318
B8	0.773	0.091	0.136

Two reference points were established on the basis of the most favorable and least favorable values of intuitionistic fuzzy sets observed in the sample, respectively. In calculating the distance between intuitionistic fuzzy sets, the Euclidean distance was used.3.

Research Results

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The for two reference points (ideal reference point and anti-ideal reference point), method was used to determine the hierarchy of the importance of the benefits, which enables the ranking of benefits assessed by respondents using a nominal measurement scale.

The choice of the method was dictated by the measurement instrument used in the form of an electronic questionnaire and ordinal measurement scale for the benefits assessments.

The ranking of the importance of diversity management benefits using the Intuitionistic Fuzzy Synthetic Measure (IFSM) for small, medium, large companies presented in the tables below (Table 5-7).

Benefits	Large		
Denents	IFSM	Rank	
B1	0.000	8	
B2	0.667	5	
B3	0.345	7	
B4	0.748	3	
B5	1.000	1	
B6	0.748	4	
B7	0.423	6	
B8	0.874	2	

Donofita	Medium		
Benefits	IFSM	Rank	
B1	0.000	8	
B2	0.790	5	
B3	0.537	6	
B4	0.853	3	
B5	0.821	4	
B6	0.936	1	
B7	0.516	7	
B8	0.872	2	

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Benefits	Small	
Belletits	IFSM Rank	
B1	0.000	8
B2	0.505	7
B3	0.517	6
B4	0.973	1
B5	0.926	3
B6	0.896	4
B7	0.673	5
B8	0.941	2

Table 7. IFSM measure va	lues and rankings of assessed benefits (small companies)
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Descriptive statistics for the IFSM measure in three groups of enterprises are presented in Table 8.

IFSM	Small	Medium	Large
max	0.973	0.936	1
min	0	0	0
s.d	0.334	0.310	0.325

Table 8. Descriptive stati

The assessments of benefits expressed in terms of IFSM values in each of the three groups are relatively high. Benefit ratings exceed 0.5 in most cases. The differentiation of these ratings measured by standard deviation is almost identical in the analyzed groups. The correlations of the position of the benefits in the rankings calculated using Kendall's tau b coefficient can be considered as average. The highest. statistically significant relationship at the level of p=0.05 was obtained for groups of small and large enterprises (tau=0.643. significance=0.026). The relationship between the rankings for groups of small and medium enterprises was statistically insignificant (significance=0.083) and amounted to tau=0.5.

The values of the IFSM measure measures presented in Tables 4-6 suggest that the survey participants were able to observe a relatively high impact of implementing the diversity management concept on most of the benefits obtained by the organizations detailed in the article. However, the analysis of the correlation matrix clearly indicates that the opinions of representatives of small, medium and large companies operating in Poland on the benefits that diversity management can give to an organization vary. Quite consistent opinions were observed among the surveyed representatives representing large and medium-sized enterprises. Considering the ranking of the benefits that diversity management can bring to an organization, both large and medium-sized enterprises showed the same aspects in position 2, 8, 5. And this included benefits related to improving employee retention (B1), talent acquisition and retention (B5) and increasing employee motivation (B2).

Respondents representing large companies indicated that diversity management has the greatest impact on increasing employee motivation (B5), medium-sized companies on "increasing engagement" (B6). Small companies, on the other hand, indicated that diversity management contributes most to improving communication among employees (B4). According to the opinion of representatives of small, medium, and large companies, the second most important benefit of diversity management is the issue of improving the quality and efficiency of teamwork (B8). According to the opinion of representatives of large and medium-sized companies, "improving communication between employees" is the third most indicated benefit of diversity management. According to all respondents - both those representing small, medium and large companies - diversity management has the least impact on increasing employee retention (B1).

Discussion

Small, medium and large companies operating in Central and Eastern Europe (Eger and Indruchová, 2014; Gross-Gołacka, 2018; Jedlička et al., 2014) including Poland are facing increasingly culturally and generationally diverse workforces, which in turn poses new challenges for managers. However, socio-economic practice and other studies show that the topic of diversity management in this part of Europe including Poland and its benefits is not explored much. And the vast majority of publications are limited to the realm of theoretical discourse (Dzieńdziora, 2018; Egan and Bendick, 2008; Köllen, 2021). Companies in Poland have been consciously making efforts to manage diversity in the organization and create inclusive organizations for only a few years. Which manifests itself, on the one hand, on discovering the potential inherent in diverse human resources. And on the other hand on the conscious management of this diversity. All this is happening against the backdrop of demographic changes, globalization and increasing migration, which is of great importance for the formation of human resources operating in the labor market and in organizations (Rzepka, 2019; Gross-Gołacka et al., 2022; Velinov, 2018; Kaur et al., 2020; Yagi, 2017). Although the current shortage of employees can be partially met by using these hidden resources (e.g. people from different age groups) and their potential.

The research results presented in the article showed strongly differentiated perceptions of the benefits of implementing the concept of diversity management in small, medium and large companies operating in Poland.

Large companies indicated as the most important benefits an increase in employee motivation and an improvement in the quality and efficiency of teamwork and communication between employees. As less important benefits, they indicated increased employee retention and reduced stress and fewer conflicts. The answers given by representatives of medium-sized companies were partially consistent with the opinions presented by large companies. As the most important benefits of implementing the concept of diversity management, they jumped in - increased employee involvement and improved quality and efficiency of teamwork and improved communication between employees. On the other hand, they indicated as the least important "increased retention of employees', "fewer conflicts", "reduction of stress". However, despite the different indications, it should be noted that small companies indicated as the most important benefits of diversity management -"improved communication between employees".

Identifying the benefits of diversity in the workplace is an important step in implementing the concept of diversity management in companies. Research confirms that the perceived effects of implementing the workplace diversity concept in organizations may vary depending on the size of the company (Herring, 2017). Therefore, considering the potential benefits of implementing the workplace diversity concept in various companies (small, medium and large) operating in Poland is a great opportunity to leverage human capital and increase the competitive advantage of the regional economy (Tipper, 2004, Thomas, 1999).

Conclusion

This study adds to the literature on diversity management and human resource management, including the management of a diverse workforce. It examines the phenomenon of diversity management in organizations and compares it in small, medium and large organizations operating in Poland. The goal was to gain an indepth understanding of which benefits of implementing the concept of diversity management in an organization are indicated by individual companies (by size) and the importance they assign to each benefit. Understanding the data underlying the behavior of entrepreneurs/managers can help human resource managers to better manage the knowledge of their employees, including the processes of its creation and implementation. This should qualitatively transform the collected data into useful knowledge for managers and enable them to improve the performance of their organizations. In other words, collecting information on the benefits of diversity management can allow organizations to generate new operational knowledge that they can manage and further use in strategic management (Mor Barak, 2017, Köllen, 2019). To this end, we simultaneously measured managers' views on how organizations benefit individually from diversity management and their assessments of these benefits.

This article contributes to the literature on diversity management by illustrating the importance of understanding the role of diversity management in an organization's strategic management. Such influence is particularly important for building competitive advantage in companies operating in Poland.

For company executives, the results of this article remind them that building a diverse workforce consciously builds their competitive advantage. For academia, the results of this article shed light on the role of workforce diversity in organizational management and call for further research on the role of diversity management in organizations, if only from the perspective of their size.

The practical implications of the results are twofold. First, the study underscores the importance of management's understanding of diversity management to an



organization's success. Second, it underscores the wide range of benefits of diversity management in organizations, and the lack of managers' knowledge on the subject can hinder the implementation of diversity management in organizations. To address this, organizations may want to look beyond data science to the skills required to understand and engage diversity.

Limitations and Future Research

Research is emerging on the priorities of diversity in the workplace, its measurement and its relationship to achievable benefits in organizations, aiming to build an increasingly seamless rationale for efforts in this area. Society is changing rapidly, and the demographic changes taking place around the world and in Europe including Poland have the potential to affect many aspects of organizational management. Hence, organizations are increasingly characterized by diversity, both in terms of external and internal environments. Another research direction for science, as well as for practitioners, is to build awareness of the concept of diversity in the workplace and its role in managing organizations. In general, modern organizations are facing challenges such as globalization, competition and changes in the labor market. This article is not without limitations. One limitation is the choice of local organizations. Future research may include more organizations and additional industries, as well as cross-country comparisons. Another future research direction is to develop the issue of barriers to diversity management and their correlation with benefits.

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PERSPEKTYWA KORZYŚCI PŁYNĄCYCH Z ZARZĄDZANIA RÓŻNORODNOŚCIĄ W ORGANIZACJACH

Streszczenie: Jednym z podstawowych etapów do wykazania korzyści biznesowych z różnorodności jest zrozumienie, co różnorodność oznacza w miejscu pracy i jakie przynosi korzyści. Ponadto, skuteczne wdrożenie praktyk wspierających środowisko pracy oparte na inkluzji wymaga uświadomienia menedżerom potencjalnych korzyści płynących z zarządzania różnorodnością. W tym kontekście artykuł przedstawia wyniki badania przeprowadzonego wśród przedstawicieli organizacji, dotyczące korzyści wynikających z wdrożenia koncepcji zarządzania różnorodnością. Część analityczna artykułu opiera się na wynikach ankiety przeprowadzonej wśród 1076 respondentów dużych, średnich i małych firm zlokalizowanych w Polsce, która została przeprowadzona przed pandemią COVID. W całej grupie, jak również w przekroju firm według wielkości, analizowano znajomość koncepcji zarządzania różnorodnością i świadomość jej korzyści. W części analitycznej artykułu wykorzystano wybrane zmodyfikowane metody wielokryterialnego podejmowania decyzji dla danych porządkowych. Przyjęcie podejścia analitycznego umożliwiło również zidentyfikowanie najważniejszych korzyści, które przedstawiciele małych, średnich i dużych firm uważają za konsekwencję wdrożenia koncepcji zarządzania różnorodnością. Uczestnicy badania byli w stanie zaobserwować stosunkowo duży wpływ wdrożenia koncepcji zarządzania różnorodnością na większość korzyści uzyskanych przez organizacje szczegółowo opisane w artykule. Jednak analiza macierzy korelacji wyraźnie wskazuje, że opinie przedstawicieli małych, średnich i dużych firm działających w Polsce na temat korzyści, jakie zarządzanie różnorodnością może przynieść organizacji, różnią się. Dość spójne opinie zaobserwowano wśród badanych przedstawicieli reprezentujących duże i średniej wielkości przedsiębiorstwa.

Słowa kluczowe: różnorodność biznesowa, zarządzanie różnorodnością, organizacja, środowisko pracy, koncepcja zarządzania różnorodnością