Grażyna OSBERT-POCIECHA[1]

MANAGEMENT IN A DYNAMICALLY CHANGING REALITY: CONSEQUENCE VERSUS NON-CONSEQUENCE

This article analyses the importance of consequence and non-consequence as conditions for effective management. In conditions of continuous and imminent change taking place both within companies and in their environment (described by the VUCA and BANI models), the role of consequence in management, understood as achieving one's goal(s), is also changing. Given the tendency towards the atrophy of consequence, increasing chaos, and the appearance of various types of paradox, there is a need to "be non-consequential", in particular in the strategic dimension of management. The results of a survey on Polish managers' perceptions of consequence and non-consequence are used to exemplify the theoretical considerations. The results indicate a "deep-rooted" tendency to maintain consequence within the traditional approach to management. This points to a need to increase the openness of Polish managers to non-consequence, which is desirable in the conditions of a dynamically changing reality.

Keywords: achieving aims, chaos, consequence, non-consequence, VUCA, BANI

1. INTRODUCTION

The traditional approach to managing an enterprise for a long time perpetuated the need to be consequent as a determinant of the effectiveness of realising aims and achieving success. The model of relentless pursuit of aims became an unquestioned standard, and an imperative for managers and enterprises in all aspects and dimensions of their operation. Uncompromising (stubborn) efforts to achieve selected/defined aims were until recently treated even as a guarantee of achieving effectiveness, ensuring a relatively stable competitive advantage and future development. Currently, in a dynamically changing world, an increasing number of indications are emerging that the domination of consequence should be broken; indications that even recommend 'being non-consequential' to managers putting into effect management processes within organizations. There is therefore a need to verify (conduct broader research on) the possibility of maintaining the existing primacy of consequence, as well as the essence and role of non-consequence as a possible antidote to the features of a diametrically changed reality which are approaching chaos, that is a state in which there is no chance of maintaining any

---

[1] Grażyna Osbert-Pociecha, Wroclaw University of Economics and Business, Poland; e-mail: grazyna.osbert-pociecha@ue.wroc.pl. ORCID 0000-0003-1951-0062.

form of order, or of ensuring the repeatability of and adherence to rules. It is also interesting (and important) to examine whether we are ready for such a 'breakthrough' in management, and whether managers are prepared for such a change, e.g. they have suitably trained skills or have at their disposal the relevant tools etc. In the conditions of the 'new normal' (Świerżewski, 2012), is it possible to refer to non-consequence to satisfy natural needs related to the functioning of every organization/enterprise, that is those needs related to ensuring the effectiveness of action, and maintaining competitiveness and a feeling of security? This initiating and explorative paper addresses this issue and draws attention to certain threads that will require confirmation and development in further research (literary and empirical). It is merely an initial attempt to structure this complex subject material, and is the result of reconnaissance into the need for preparation of a full research project.

2. DESCRIPTORS OF A CHANGING REALITY.

For almost 40 years we have lived in a world defined by the term VUCA (an acronym of *Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguity)*[2]. This term is used to reflect the highly complex and unstable environment in which enterprises currently operate. Adapting to the requirements of VUCA is today a huge challenge for managers, who are unable to avoid confrontation due to the ever-changing contemporary reality. B. Johansen (Euchner, 2013) used the VUCA conceptual framework (model) to demonstrate how turbulent changes can affect an organization, arguing that there is a need to move away from traditional management (leadership) due to a lack of effectiveness. On the one hand, VUCA showed our helplessness in defining the world surrounding us, with no opportunity for controlling it. On the other hand, VUCA became a certain norm for an increasing number of firms/sectors that allowed them to decode what was happening in the organization's environment. With time, VUCA began to fulfil the role of a 'useful compass' in a world in which it is ever more difficult to understand/interpret, and in which it is increasingly difficult to take effective action. In this way, the model became a starting point for proactive solutions and the creation of action plans despite highly limited predictability and various types of turmoil. VUCA also became a means for not being overwhelmed by the fact that the paradigm based on cause-and-effect logic had ceased to function, or that it was useless to refer to trends and benchmarks or to organizational memory. VUCA provided an opportunity to not descend into a state of passivity, despite the awareness of not being in control of the fact that the borders were blurred between the external environment and the internal workings of the organization, and the tempo of necessary changes did not allow for suitable preparation for their implementation.

Initially, the VUCA concept framework was presented as a combination of 4 features of the changed reality, as well as 4 challenges for managers:
- *Volatility* – means an increasing tempo of changes (the occurrence of rapid and hard to predict changes), which undermined the sense of creating plans in the organization (they become immediately outdated).

---

[2] The term VUCA was introduced in the military around 1988, and was quickly transferred into other fields, becoming widespread in broadly understood business at the beginning of the 21st century (Grabmeier, 2020). Earlier, as a part of strategic analysis to describe the influence of key areas on the functioning of organizations the term PEST was used (an acronym of Political, Economic, Social, Technological) (https://mfiles.pl/pl/index.php/Analiza_PEST). An equivalent that appeared in the Polish literature is SPAM – an acronym of *Szybkozmienność, Płynność, Arcyzłożoność, Mętność (Rapidity, Liquidity, Extreme complexity, Turbidity)* (Grabowski, 2019).

- *Uncertainty* – means the lack of possibility to predict the future (surprise), which makes it difficult to react to requirements/impulses from the environment.
- *Complexity* – means the lack of possibility to understand events (problems) due to various overlapping 'interwoven' factors/conditions, and the difficulty in identifying the cause-and-effect chain.
- *Ambiguity* – means the lack of clarity (lack of knowledge), which makes it difficult to interpret the implications connected to taking decisions (increasing risk).

However, despite the obvious cognitive benefits, the borders (understanding) of the basic components of VUCA raised difficulties and limited the possibility of both undertaking further more in-depth research, as well as taking decisions (in particular those of a strategic nature). It was only in 2022 on the basis of systematic literature research from the period 1999–2021 that the conceptual framework of VUCA was fully structured (Taskan, Junca-Silva, Caetano, 2022). Today, characteristic signs of VUCA are clearly visible, and there is no doubt as to their universal presence, however, the problem that remains is finding a way to react to them.

The need to increase the applicability of the VUCA model, including formulating recommendations for managers, was noted by B. Johansen (2012) who expanded the VUCA conceptual framework by adding managerial implications to the individual components. Thus volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity were connected respectively with the following recommendations:

V-vision. This refers to counteracting volatility by creating a convincing vision of the firm/venture (together with defining the value for people resulting from it).

U-understanding. As a reaction to uncertainty, this relates to acquiring information from various sources (clients, suppliers, employees, competitors, shareholders), and creating channels/environments for open communication.

C-clarity. This refers mainly to clarity in people management i.e., maintaining the focus on achieving vision, preparing procedures for employees to complete tasks/processes, as well as ensuring their development oriented towards readiness to take action (take decisions) in changed conditions.

A-agility. This comes down to making adaptive action effective by testing solutions (experimenting).

The recommendations added under VUCA Prime are very important 'road signs' for company managers, however their use is related to the need to 'transform' them into concrete competencies and behaviours of individual managers/leaders, with a simultaneous distinction into those that

- should be maintained and even developed,
- should be abandoned (or their development should be halted),
- should be particularly focused on.

So that the move from traditional management to management in the VUCA world takes place without drawing out the transgressive changes over time, and avoiding negative consequences e.g., not fully adapting to the requirements of a chaotic environment.

A. Piątkowska (2021) took up the challenge of listing the competencies that ensure a leader's effectiveness in a VUCA world. This is a list of 72 competencies, with each one connected to specific distinguishing features, which made it possible to create a broad spectrum of leader/manager competencies.

This list does not only contain competencies such as: the ability to be non-consequential, the competence to unlearn and re-learn once again, competencies related to

managing tension resulting from paradoxes, or the ability to implement *trade up* (*both/and*) principles. It can be noted that some component elements of these competencies are found as distinguishing features of competencies contained in the above-mentioned list e.g., in adaptive skills – *appreciating conflicting perspectives on solving a problem, the ability to stop if facts confirm that there is no chance of success,* in problem-solving skills – *use of non-standard solutions,* in coping with complexity – *considering different points of view,* in flexibility – *adapting to non-schematic solutions.* Of course, it is difficult to see this state of affairs as satisfactory, and it is evident that there is a need for further exploration of skills/competencies and manager/leader behaviours within management to ensure conditions for businesses to cope with intensified turbulence. In particular, in the search for an antidote to these conditions for the functioning of businesses, focus should be placed on identifying 'new' desired skills and behaviours e.g., being non-consequential, or demonstrating humility.

Concentrating on managers' competencies is an important determinant of functioning in a VUCA world, but it does not mean that other equally crucial issues structuring broadly understood company management should not be taken into consideration. These are also subject to the effect of VUCA, and include decision-making, shaping organizational structure, work processes, resource management (including human resources) etc.

Are we capable of meeting these challenges, especially as we have still not been able to deal to a satisfactory degree with the reaction to VUCA, and we are already witnessing a further deepening/intensification of chaos in the reality in which organizations and employees function? (https://zmiana.edu.pl/vuca-jest-juz-do-bani...). This was expressed by J. Cascio (2020), who stated that the VUCA description of current reality does not allow us to a satisfactory degree to 'exit' towards the future. He therefore constructed the BANI model, assuming that:

- whatever is variable and unstable ceases to be reliable,
- people who feel unsure generate anxiety/fear and fail to take action,
- complexity no longer only has a structural dimension, but also results from the non-linear dynamics of individual component elements,
- it is increasingly harder (despite relatively easy access to data, information) for us to understand specific situations, take a step forward, or try to find our own path.

BANI here is an acronym of *Brittle, Anxious, Nonlinear, Incomprehensible.* Thus:

B – means that the world, the economy, the firm and human life are only seemingly merged/strong and reliable, and that as a result of the 'wave effect' can 'fall apart' or be subject to failure/catastrophe at any moment.

A – means that irrespective of what we do, both organizations and people live in constant fear (of what may happen or what may go wrong), remain tense and wait, and at the same time the generated fear creates a feeling of urgency which affects decisions/actions taken.

N – means a disconnect between cause and effect, or at least a lack of proportionality. An unimportant action can have devastating effects, and the consequences of any cause can result immediately or appear with a delay, be postponed or not appear at all.

I – means the lack of possibility to understand or find all possible answers/variants, and results from disorientation, becoming lost in an overload of data, and being overwhelmed by information, and in addition the answers obtained are not clear or convincing and do not provide opportunities for taking further action.

As can be seen, the BANI world, that is the reality described by the above-mentioned dimensions, is not easy to manage, and makes us realise the price of developmental changes of an achieved civilizational level. It also makes us realise the need to integrate all systems (economic, social, ecological, energy and political), and the need for particular care to prevent the dysfunction of these systems so as to make possible the further productive, balanced functioning of enterprises. The BANI conceptual framework brings sense to the chaotic world, indicating (despite the terror resulting from chaos) the possibility for building new approaches that allow for the continued functioning of organizations, amongst others by recommending: if something is fragile, the focus should be on finding resilience, if we feel anxiety, we should develop mindfulness and vigilance and empathy, to deal with non-linearity we should look for new contexts, new knowledge and adaptive opportunities resulting, for example, from new technologies. Meanwhile, lack of understanding should be dealt with by developing clear, more critical thinking, and by more often referring to as yet insufficiently appreciated intuition (Szaban, 2012).

In conclusion, the realities as described both by the VUCA and BANI models clearly emphasize that the current conditions for the functioning of enterprises are diametrically different, and that striving to implement in them current patterns of action (including management processes), as well as expecting the achievement of the desired results, are doomed to failure and put the enterprise in jeopardy (plunge it into chaos).

Seeking opportunities for survival and functioning in the future is related to the ability to abandon consequence as an absolute imperative, which at the same time requires more recognition for non-consequence as an act of courage and a way to achieve resilience, that is positive adaptation in the face of unfavourable conditions in the environment and managing the stress resulting from remaining in a chaotic reality, in which the rapidity of change and time pressure do not allow for procrastination (postponing decisions and action).

3. FROM TRADITIONAL MANAGEMENT TO CONSEQUENT NON-CONSEQUENCE IN MANAGEMENT

In the search for a designation of management, that is an answer to the question what is its essence (leaving aside the complexity and multi-dimensionality of the concept), it can be assumed that the essence of management is the 'forging' of goals into results. From the very outset, this has been a subject of great excitement connected with taking various types of action, using a variety of approaches and concepts and their related instruments, and focusing on the conditions of this process (in particular catalysts and barriers) in order to effectively and efficiently transform more or less sophisticated aspirations and intentions into concrete reality (products, services). Achieving these results (goals) giving a feeling of satisfaction, of agency, at the same time encourages the generation of further goals, and the undertaking of additional challenges so as not only to ensure continued functioning, but also social, economic and civilizational development, as well as the chance for survival in the future. Through their reference to the future and their attributes (for example the fact that in themselves they are a stimulus to action, that they allow for the integration of the actions of many entities/people, thus leading to achieving a synergy effect and making it possible to exercise control and make assessments) goals become the basis for satisfying our needs, both those related to maintaining the status quo as well as those connected to introducing changes and to development. As noted by S.P. Robbins and D.A. De Cenzo

(2019), setting goals is the first step to transforming what as yet does not exist (cannot be seen) into what becomes reality.

Such a view of the role of a goal[3] (including a company goal) places huge pressure on ensuring a efficiency management process, which includes a choice/formulation phase and then a realization phase. Striving to effectively achieve a chosen goal is the expression of the need for success as a measure of the tasks accomplished.

One of the fundamental conditions of management oriented towards success understood in this way is maintaining consequence in striving to achieve a chosen (designated) goal. Being consequent has been consolidated as a determinant of the ultimate achievement of a goal in traditional management, and remained a model of conduct for many decades.

The commonly used standard of a cycle of organized actions, that is a set of actions within separate, subsequent stages that bring the achievement of a given goal closer, meant that the relation between consequence resulting from the realization of various stages of the cycle and the result as achievement of the goal became obvious. Identifying being consequent with ensuring the achievement of success was promoted by academics researching key factors in the success of organizations, as well as by practitioners implementing the recommendation of maintaining consequence as an implication of this research. Amongst others, J. Collins and J. Porras (2019), in their description of effective practices used by the best firms, drew attention to the development over many years (very consequently) of such conditions as a vision, a culture of decision-making and leadership.

Also worth mentioning here is the research of A. Duckworth (2016), the author of the GRIT concept, that is an acronym of *Guts, Resilience, Initiative, Tenacity* as predictors of success in achieving a goal. She demonstrated the driving force of tenacity (the Polish equivalent of GRIT) in striving to achieve a goal (in particular a long-term goal). Tenacity, understood here as persistence in the pursuit of a goal/goals is something more than merely trying to achieve a goal, it is the determination not to give up, to not 'abandon' a chosen goal. This is 'persistence' in the process of realizing actions in connection with passion, which generates a driving force of engagement for the achievement of a goal/goals in conditions where the realization process is spread out over time, and where there are a very large number of factors that constitute barriers on the path to the chosen goal.

With time, treating consequence as a key condition for effective achievement of a goal reinforced the belief that being consequent was an indicator of success, understood not only as the successful completion of a single cycle of organized action, but also as the organization's ability to develop over a long timeframe.

The encoding in the consciousness of the connection between consequence and success resulted in the appearance of an orthodox approach to achieving a goal through maniacal consequence and fanatical zeal in pursuing a goal, leading at times to the violations of moral principles and the 'destruction' of people (for such practices the principle was 'forged' that the aim justifies the means).

It is also worth noting that this specific 'career' of identifying consequence with organizational success is an exemplification of R. Caldini's third principle – 'if something has been deemed right by the environment (the majority) – it is relatively easier to deem it correct and difficult to question it' (Cialdini, 2009).

Consequence, understood here as mainly resulting from cause-and-effect logic of the continuity/consistency of action, not on the basis of a one-off impulse/action, based on a specific method/arrangement, has become a value in itself in western culture. Its role in

---

[3] Hereinafter, this concept is used in the singular, but can also refer to a group of goals.

the past, its current validity in various areas of life, for example in education and business, as well as sport and politics, and its importance in achieving success, and making progress and civilizational development are all undeniable.

In the past, consequence was treated as a particular 'virtue', both with regard to the organization as well as the manager/leader [Merriman, 2017], and was connected with various types of benefits, for example:

- developing habits that improved performance,
- creating procedures so as to avoid action based on fire-fighting,
- increasing the level of trust resulting from consistency of behaviours and attitudes,
- increasing discipline in the completion of subsequent tasks,
- nurturing relationships with various stakeholders (clients, employees etc.),
- working to achieve stability and a feeling of security.

However, consequence that refers to actions according to an accepted scheme (realized in one and the same way) and that respects the succession of events can constitute a certain form of trap, causing 'imprisonment' in a defined mode of thinking/acting that can block innovative solutions and creative thinking outside applied schemes. It can also intensify the desire to remain in the comfort zone and to strive to maintain the status quo at any price (resistance to changes).

Escaping to acceptance of abandoning previous choices, and moving away from accepted solutions results, among others, from the need to reach (in conditions of an accelerating pace of change, and the constant appearance of new impulses that require a reaction) for the attribute of the organization that is 'ambidexterity', or the ability to use 'both hands' with equal ease (skill), that is various solutions of a contrasting and sometimes conflicting nature (Tushman, O'Reilly, 2004). The a*mbidexterity* of an organization that results directly from the ambivalence/duality of the reality that surrounds us naturally gives rise to the need to be non-consequential, especially when so far we have clung tightly in organization management only to 'one side of the coin', for example basing our activity only on hierarchical structures or avoiding the choice of outsourcing as an alternative to concentrating all activities resulting from realization of the business concept within the company's organizational structure.

As noted by R. Krzeszewska (2022), striving for *ambidexterity* while accepting the effects related to being non-consequential and the occurrence of the risk of conflict generation can nevertheless lead to increasing the efficiency of management in a company functioning in the 'new normal'.

Meanwhile, in practice we stubbornly hold on to the conventional approach to managing a company, that is patterns of thinking and acting based on linearity, without the inclination to allow for other alternatives, and we try to be all faithful to choices made earlier in conditions of difficult to 'absorb' dynamic changes caused, for example, by globalization, technological progress (digitalization), degradation of the natural environment etc. This is also related to the encoded assumption that we have to be rational, and in our thinking and acting respect logic, i.e. based on possessed knowledge about methods of action seen as not raising objections or doubts and appropriate for *homo oeconomicus*. Meanwhile, increasingly often the paradigm of classical economy that assigns people and organizations rationality is being undermined (Popowicz, 2004).

In exploring the essence of irrationality, D. Ariely (2018) shows and emphasizes that human nature is irrational, proving at the same time that humans are predictably irrational. This allows the stereotype of irrationality to be broken and should lead to a more positive

view of 'non-consequential' decisions/actions. In many cases, these are almost automatically qualified as irrational and therefore giving no guarantee of effective achievement of desired states in the future. In the current conditions in which businesses function, increasingly often the need arises to 'move' to a different goal (when facing the risk of not achieving the one chosen earlier, or it becoming outdated in the light of new needs, change of priorities etc.). It is important therefore that the non-consequence necessary in this regard is not treated orthodoxically as an irrational action so that a reality is not arranged in the company that would eliminate seemingly irrational solutions.

In light of the above considerations, it looks as if basing actions on being consequent as a stereotype shaped in times of enlightenment and scientism is no longer defensible, for example due to the fact that a lack of consequence often evokes a feeling of guilt, and we are unable in life as in management to be non-consequential enough in adequate proportion to a reality in which there is an ever more significant:

- lack of continuity (in transmitting thoughts, ideas, behaviours/traditions, values etc. to the next generation),
- violation of mental order based on logic,
- lack of possibility to identify cause-and-effect relations,
- occurrence of lack of trust in professional knowledge.

The above conditions generate pressure towards limiting the domination of consequence and broader acceptance of non-consequence in management (on the principles of complementarity).

It must be taken into account that in the management process, being non-consequential, questioning, resigning from current goals and the ways in which they are realized remains closely related to the skill f 'unlearning' (forgetting) and then quickly learning new things and acquiring/assimilating new knowledge, that is putting into practice A. Toffler's '*learn, unlearn and relearn*' cycle (https://blog.learnlife.com/...). It is emphasized that this cycle will be the determinant of our work in the future. To date, we have seen a preference for the first phase of the cycle, i.e. learning and ensuring a growth in knowledge. The dynamic acceleration of changes in the company's surroundings as well as inside the company, and the accumulation of huge knowledge resources for use and their outdating (diminishing usefulness), are the reason for an increasing need to move to the stages of unlearning and relearning. The more we are able to unlearn, the greater the chances will be of assimilating knowledge that is useful in the context of new operating requirements.

Due to increasing volatility and unpredictability, traditional management methods and their related tools have limited possibilities and are ineffective [Hamel and Breen, 2008]. To ensure the efficient achievement of intended management goals, we are doomed to continually search for new paradigms. As a part of this search, at the beginning of the 21st century the focus was on the paradoxes that are written in to management (Polowczyk, 2014) and dealing with them is today a key challenge due to rising uncertainty, which 'pushes' organizations to the brink of chaos (Nestorowicz, 2001). Paradoxes in their essence maintain a tension between elements/poles that are connected to one another (Leja, 2013). Each of them is logically justified, even though they are opposites (such as inhaling and exhaling in the process of breathing), and do not 'at first glance' simply exclude one another. This provides the opportunity to generate innovative solutions not on the basis of *a priori* rejection of the other pole, but by skilfully integrating the dichotomous elements of the paradox (Lewis, 2000). Until now, by ignoring these possibilities in order to reduce the tension related to paradoxes and to simplify management, the choice was made to

adhere to one of the options, moving away from taking other possibilities into consideration and thus giving in to the tyranny OR (a selection on the basis of *either/or-trade off*) and avoiding exposure to non-consequence. It has been noted that the future of dealing with paradoxes and reducing their immanent tensions will require managers implementing the management process to bring these tensions into the daylight, merge opposites i.e., submit to the genius of 'AND' (choice on the basis of *both/and-trade up*), smoothly move from the goals and solutions from one pole to the goals/solutions located at the opposite extreme, which will inevitably will require giving up, abandonment, resignation that is being non-consequential, and the ability to unlearn that which 'worked yesterday but no longer works today' (https://app.santorski.pl/…).

W.K. Smith, M.W. Lewis and M.L. Tushman (2016) claim that dealing with paradoxes requires managers to accept their nature, which does not mean 'switching' from one extreme to the other, but is more about seeking solutions that as an answer to the attempt to explore and investigate the essence of this conflict/contradiction will stand out by their consistency and adherence to current requirements and to the dynamics of events. Therefore, (ambidextrous) managers/leaders must in these conditions be consequently non-consequential and concentrate on management with a lack of consequence (in particular at the level of strategic paradoxes[4]).

To summarize the above considerations on the future of company management, due to the dynamically changing environment, the problem arises of the appropriate ability/readiness to be non-consequential.

4. PILOT STUDY INTO THE PERCEPTIONS OF CONSEQUENCE AND NON-SEQUENCE IN MANAGEMENT AMONG POLISH PRACTITIONERS

4.1. Research aim and methods

The research was conducted in the second half of 2022 using the pilot study method, and via a questionnaire that was distributed to respondents by email (analogically to CAWI). To avoid a key drawback of the CAWI method (lack of or not complete control on the part of the researcher) and to ensure that reliable empirical material was obtained, at the stage of research sample/respondent selection as part of stage triangulation, so-called arrangement (Sztabiński P.B., Sawiński, Sztabiński F., 2005). of stages was used characteristic for interview techniques[5].

---

[4] Of course, at the level of operating activities realized in a short timeframe, the strength of the effect of paradox tension (e.g., between goals related to financial results and the company's social mission) is weaker, and it is understandable that in order to reduce such tension, task owners select one option and are consequent in bringing it to realization.

[5] Arrangement is the activity of the researcher related to acquiring a respondent who fulfills the adopted sample selection criteria, and then explaining to them the aims and subject of the research (information phase), as well as encouraging/convincing them to participate in the research (persuasion phase). As a stage in the research process, although arrangement may be time-consuming, it allows the researcher to eliminate random respondents who do not identify with the aim of the research (although identifying with the aim does not have to mean a lack of objectivity), and thus increases the chances that answers to the questions contained in the questionnaire will be of suitable quality. This stage is particularly desirable in situations where the subject/examined phenomenon shows itself to be complex, and the participation of respondents does not simply come down to registering specific facts (previously documented 'blindingly obvious' facts), but requires

Purposeful selection of the research sample was used by inviting people to join the research who are/were clients of one training and consulting firm in Wroclaw (i.e., the owners of firms/businesspeople, managing directors (presidents and board members of firms, managing directors of operations), and project team leaders). The questionnaire contained metrics relating to the characteristics of the respondents and the organizations they represent, as well as questions on the examined issues.

In total, 54 people (N=54) took part in the research, and as this sample does not meet the criterium of representativeness, the results of the research do not provide a basis for the generalization of the conclusions. Nevertheless, the obtained data can be used to form notions/opinions on the presence and role of both consequence and non-consequence in company management by Polish practitioners. It is also intended that the questionnaire results be used to formulate and verify detailed research hypotheses as part of a planned research project.

The research focused on obtaining answers to the following issues:

- how deep-seated in the management process is the belief about the cause-and-effect connection between consequence and achieving goals; are differences noted between consequence and perseverance.
- how do 'being consequent' and 'being non-consequential' manifest themselves (symptoms) and what do they come down to in being a manager in practice.
- what can be the effects of non-consequence in management practice (is non-consequence a sin or a virtue).

4.2. Selected research results

In terms of the characteristics of the research sample, 22.2% of the respondents were people in the position CEO of company, 48.2% were businesspeople/company owners, and the remaining 29.6% were operations directors or team leaders. The largest proportion of the research sample was made up of respondents with experience of 11–20 years (42.6%), slightly fewer (37%) had up to 10 years of experience, 16.7% of respondents had between 20 and 30 years of experience, while only 3.7% had over 30 years of experience. As for organization size (according to number of employees), large organizations made up 13%, medium-sized organizations 48.7% and small organizations 38.8%. In terms of scope of operations, the proportions were as follows: global reach – 5.6%, international – 11.1%, national – 42.6% and regional or local 40.7%. Taking into consideration the phase of the organization's lifecycle, 9.3% were in the birth phase, 46.3% in the growth phase and 44.4% in the mature phase.

Due to a lack of limitations regarding the scope of operation of the organizations, the research sample included a very broad spectrum of sectors, including industrial processing, construction, agriculture, transport, logistics, trade, material and non-material services, healthcare and others (the structure of the sample according to sector was ultimately not determined). In terms of the criterium regarding economic and financial condition, notable in the self-assessment of the examined organizations was a worsening of this condition in 2021 in comparison to 2020; there was a drop in the proportion of entities in very good and good condition, respectively 38% and 25%, down from 52% and 40%. Meanwhile, there was an increase in the proportion of entities in the group with an average economic and financial condition.

---

the use of creative thinking to explore the examined phenomenon in depth, and to make a balanced assessment with the use of various perspectives, as well as demonstrating the ability to anticipate.

Below are the results related to some questions contained in the questionnaire:

Question 1. *As a manager, are you convinced that consequence in the management process determines success, i.e., the efficient and effective achievement of defined goals?*

In answer to this question, 81% indicated YES, 8% selected NOT ALWAYS, and the remaining 11% considered that consequence is one of the many preconditions to success.

This demonstrates that the stereotype of identifying success with consequence is deeply rooted in the consciousness of managers/management practitioners.

Question 2. *In your management practice, despite dynamically changing operating (environmental) conditions, do you treat consequence as a priority?*

The answer YES ('I definitely use consequence') was selected by 68%, 22% selected the answer I TRY TO (despite everything), while 10% of respondents admitted that they do not treat 'being consequent' in an orthodox manner, and in the process of achieving defined aims allow for flexibility and openness to alternatives.

Question 3. *This referred to the understanding of consequence (its essence).* The distribution of practitioners' answers on the suggested list was as follows (a maximum of 3 options could be selected):

- not permitting a goal change (resignation); approval only for change in the means and/or modes of action for achieving a defined goal – 29.6%,
- preserving continuity of action necessary for achieving a goal in a specified time period – 16.0%,
- maintaining consistency with other goals – 7.4%,
- guaranteeing repeatability (acting according to schemes/patterns) – 9.8%,
- respecting the cause-and-effect relationship (rules of implication) -14.9%,
- eliminating various types of barrier/difficulty on the path to achieving a goal (including those relating to resources and modes of action) – 22.2%.

In light of these results, the most popular dimension of consequence in the management process is opposition to changes to previously selected goals, that in some way strengthens the above understanding of consequence in focusing on neutralizing and removing barriers preventing the achievement of a goal. The least often selected was concentration on consistency with other goals, which is interesting in that most often we are talking about a specific set of integrated goals (a specified goal structure).

Question 4. *In my opinion, do consequence and perseverance in the process of achieving a goal differ from one another?* The aim here was to verify whether managers/practitioners perceive there to be a difference between what appear to identical concepts. As shown by the answers (NO – 74.1% and YES – 25.9%), the majority identify these concepts with one another, treating them as synonyms. However, when formulating recommendations, it is worth differing between consequence, as in following a chosen path, a defined route that is treated as the only alternative for reaching a goal, while perseverance does not take into account abandoning the chosen goal, but assumes the possibility for correcting the path (sometimes the path is longer and less comfortable, or 'diverts' from the beaten track etc.). In business (and not only) it is worth knowing for which goals we should be consequent, and for which we should be perseverant.

Question 5. *In my opinion, in what way can non-consequence (symptoms) manifest itself in the management process – reaching goals?* The distribution of practitioners' answers on the suggested list was as follows (a maximum of 2 options could be selected):

- abandoning or resigning from previously selected goals/plans (diametrically different from the assumed realization) – 50%,

- abandoning, halting actions to achieve goals after the disclosure of facts (errors) that make impossible to fully achieve the goals – 30.5%,
- interest in/acceptance of new goals that appear on the basis of an opportunity (as an alternative to previously defined goals) – 19.5%.

All respondents clearly favoured the first option, with their next choice being non-consequence resulting from the lack of possibility of achieving satisfactory results, however, only a fifth of them noted that non-consequence can be the result of the appearance/concretization of opportunities (new possibilities).

Question 6. *This involved indicating the causes/sources of non-consequence in management (in goal achievement).* The distribution of practitioners' answers on the suggested list was as follows (a maximum of 3 options could be selected):

- outdating of goals selected for completion, change of priorities – 29.6%,
- irrational criteria not allowing for the selection of goals (emotions, intuition) – 4.9%,
- no possibility for full realization of defined goals (excessive risk) – 19.7%,
- appearance of a contradiction between the goal and individual interest groups – 12.3%,
- the entities engaged in the realization process do not identify with the selected goals – 12.9%.
- lack of responsibility among entities engaged in the goal realization process (not adhering to time constraints, budget limitations etc.) – 20.4%.

Here, external causes turned out to be obvious in making selected goals outdated and generating problems with their realization. Internal causes were also underlined e.g., contradictions related to interest groups, as well as entities not identifying with these goals.

Question 7. *In my opinion, can being non-consequential in management (in goal achievement) bring the company benefits* e.g., improvement in financial results, increase in market competitiveness, improving the firm's image as an employer or as an entity that does not pose a threat to the environment etc.).

37% of respondents answered YES to this question, while 63% did not perceive such possibilities, which seems to confirm the belief in the negative impact of non-consequence.

Question 8. *This also related to effects through the respondent conducting a self-assessment of previously used cases of 'non-consequence' in company management.* Here:

- 33.3% of respondents admitted the occurrence of unexpected/surprising benefits (market, financial, other e.g., related to improvement in the atmosphere in the organization, a rise in trust etc.),
- 51.8% of respondents considered that there had above all been negative effects i.e., worsening of financial results, worsening of relations with business partners etc.),
- 14.8% of respondents considered that in fact the remaining such practices were neutral i.e., they did not affect the company's situation.

Question 9. *This related to verifying how in general respondents perceived 'being non-consequential' in management (as a 'virtue' or as a 'sin').*

It is significant that almost 45% selected the option 'I don't know', with that 22.2% who selected the 'sin' option, it given result which in the overwhelming majority remaining in the conventional management paradigm, and not being convinced that non-consequence in current management conditions can be something that is desirable.

5. FINAL CONCLUSIONS

The literature review results and the pilot study results:

- confirm that the functioning of enterprises in the future is related to the need to go beyond the 'old world' framework, including the necessity of abandoning previously tried and tested patterns of conduct (consequence in the management process).
- confirm that managers implementing management processes on a daily basis are 'rooted' in the traditional approach to achieving goals.
- clearly signal the need to increase managers' tendency to make use of the skills of 'being non-consequential' in management in conditions of VUCA/BANI.
- underline the need for greater appreciation of non-consequence as an act of courage and a means of resilience i.e., positive adaptation in the face of unfavourable conditions in the environment, as well as managing the stress resulting from being in a chaotic reality, in which the rapidity of change and time pressure do not allow for procrastination (postponing decisions and actions).
- indicate that in order to formulate managerial implications (as a part of applicability), it is necessary to develop a more fully structured concept/dimensions framework for the concepts of both consequence and non-consequence, as well as systemization of various types of conditions related to their use.

REFERENCES

Ariely, D. (2018). *Potęga irracjonalności. Ukryte siły, które wpływają na nasze decyzje.* Sopot: Wydawnictwo Smak Słowa.

Cascio, J. (2020). *Facing the Age of Chaos* [Access: 16.12.2022]. Access on the internet: https://medium.com/@cascio/facing-the-age-of-chaos-b00687b1f51d.

Cialdini, R.B. (2009). *Wywieranie wpływu na ludzi. Teoria i praktyka.* Gdańsk: Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne.

Collins, J., Porras, J.I. (2019). *Wizjonerskie organizacje. Skuteczne praktyki najlepszych z najlepszych.* Warszawa: MT Biznes.

Duckworth, A. (2016). *Upór. Potęga pasji i wytrwałości.* Łódź: Galaktyka.

Euchner, J. (2013). *Navigating the VUCA World; An Interview with Bob Johansen. "Research Technology Managment*", t. 56, No. 1 (Jan /Feb).

Grabmeier, S. (2020). *BANI versus VUCA: a new acronym to describe the world* [Access: 21.10.2022]. Access on the internet: https://stephangrabmeier.de/bani-versus-vuca/.

Grabowski, W., Naumiuk, M., Rubin, J. (2019). *Zwinnologia. Innowacyjne podejście do zarządzania zmianą.* Warszawa: MT Biznes.

Hamel, G., Breen, B. (2008). *Zarządzanie jutra.* Lublin: Wydawnictwo Red Horse.

https://app.santorski.pl/bani-jak-odnajdywac-sie-w-chaotycznym swiecie/.

https://blog.learnlife.com/learn-unlearn-relearn.

https://zmiana.edu.pl/vuca-jest-juz-do-bani-czyli-w-poszukiwaniu-odpowiedzi/.

https://mfiles.pl/pl/index.php/Analiza_PEST.

Johansen, B. (2012). *Leaders Make the Future. Ten new leadership skills for uncertain.* San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

Krzeszewska, R. (2022)*. Ambidexterity w polskiej terminologii z zakresu zarządzania. "E-mentor",* No. 3 (95) [Access: 30.01.2023]. Access on the internet: https://www. e-mentor.edu.pl/artykul/index/numer/95/id/1571.

Leja, K. (2013). *Paradoksy w zarządzaniu organizacją. Wejście „do" czy wyjście „z" labiryntu. "Przedsiębiorczość i Zarządzanie",* t. XIV, z. 13, cz. I.

Lewis, M.W. (2000). *Exploring Paradox. Toward a more comprehensive guide. "The Academy of Managment Review",* t. 25, No. 4.

Nestorowicz, P. (2001). *Organizacja na krawędzi chaosu.* Kraków: Wydawnictwo Profesjonalnej Szkoły Biznesu.

Merriman, K.K. (2017). *Leadership and Perseverance,* Marques, J., Dhman, S. (eds), *Leadership Today.* Switzerland: Springer International Publishing.

Piątkowska, A. (2021). *Przywództwo w świecie VUCA.* Gliwice: Onepress.

Polowczyk, J. (2014). *Zarządzanie strategiczne jako wielowymiarowa przestrzeń paradoksów. "Studia Oeconomica Posnaniensia",* Vol. 2, No. 2.

Popowicz, K. (2004). *Racjonalność w zarządzaniu przyszłością. "Organizacja i Kierowanie",* No. 4.

Robbins, S.P., De Cenzo, D.A. (2019). *Podstawy zarządzania.* Warszawa: PWE.

Smith, W.K., Lewis, M.W., Tushman, M. L. (2016). *Both/and Leaderhip. "Harvard Business Review",* Vol. 94, No. 5.

Szaban, J. (2012). *Intuicja i racjonalność w zarządzaniu. "Współczesne Zarządzanie",* No. 4.

Sztabiński, P.B., Sawiński, Z., Sztabiński, F. (2005). *Fieldwork jest sztuką.* Warszawa: Instytut Filozofii i Socjologii PAN.

Świerżewski, Ł. (2012). *Nowa normalność w świecie biznesu. "Harvard Business Review Polska",* No. 7–8.

Taskan, B., Junca-Silva, A., Caetano, A. (2022). *Clarifying the conceptual map of VUCA. A systematic review. „International Journal of Organizational Analysis",* Vol. 30, No. 7.

Tushman, M.L., O'Reilly, Ch. A. (2004). *The Ambidextious Orgaization. "Harvard Business Review",* Vol. 82, No. 4.