

# Characteristics of cognitive distortions in managerial work between men and women

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**Abstract:** Objective of this article is to evaluate of cognitive distortions between men and woman in managerial work. The Main attention is paid to issue of managerial work, which involves some specific knowledge, skills and crafts, because it ensures the achievements of goals of managed organization. In context of cognitive distortions based on Beck's theory of dysfunction schemes, we analyse differences between men and women.

**Keywords:** cognitive distortions, managerial work, communication, interpersonal system

**JEL Classification:** M50, P30, M11, M12, M19

## Introduction

George Kelly (1905-1967) is considered as a founder of cognitive psychology. The basis of his study is studying of mental (ideal, intellectual), but the most important study of cognitive processes.

According to Ruisel and Ruisel (1990), after the Second World War, cognitive psychology over times has shifted to a model of information processing. This model was based on the ideas described in symbolic logic and cybernetics on the one hand and Wurzburg and Gestalt psychology on the other hand.

Kvasnicka (2009) points to cognition as the set of operations that help us identifying our inner and outer world. He indicates all processes, by which inputs are transformed, processed, stored, invoked and used. This also applies to processes, which occur in the absence of various stimulations, such as hallucinations.

Sternberg (2002) points to cognitive psychology as people, who perceive different information, trying to understand, explain, remember and at the same time think about them. His main question is how people perceive different forms, why people remember some information, while others forget, about how to learn language, how they think, when they play chess or solve their everyday problems.

According to Ruisel (2012), the main task of cognitive psychology is to solve two problems. The first one is to examine the nature and character of human knowledge and the second one is to discover, how this knowledge are acquired and enjoyed. Ruisel adds that applied psychology is increasingly contributing to development of theory of applied psychology. Evidences are the number of important psychological theories, which come from practical psychology and especially psychotherapy (for example, Freud's theory of personality, Beck's theory of cognitive depression and his concept of cognitive distortions and diagrams, Seligman's theory of learned helplessness, Lazarus management of stress and others), at which the new techniques and themes, that require a deeper need of exploring and understanding the psychic reality of a human.

Abram's (1997) suggest that cognitive distortions can arise in the process of social interaction, mistakes in his knowledge, not only from the scientific but also from the psychological point of view. It is important to note that, especially in terms of predicting the intensity and duration of their own emotions, people make a very inaccurate estimate, which affects many areas in legal system, the psychological environment and cognitive psychology. The author shifts thought of our judgments based on knowledge and experience with a certain level of partiality and includes cognitive distortions, at which in those judgements will be operate the cognitive distortions. In case of these problems, knowing the most common cognitive distortions, which occur among other thing in decision making part of the organs, it would be possible to eliminate the seizures stemming from such distortions of perception.

Majtán (2007) describe a manager as a role of profession, which manages activities of organizational unit (departments, collectives), in terms of optimal use of human, material, technical, financial, informational and other resources to achieve set of objectives.

Prokopenko (1996) introduced the managerial work and relationship of individual requirements for his work:

- **What to do?** – Mainly, managers to a middle levels (data analysis, financial analysis etc.),
- **How to do?** – Competencies of managers (skills, time management, communicate etc.),
- **Personal traits and characteristics** (productivity, creativity, flexibility, etc.)
- **Know – how** – basic knowledge of about technology, relationship in organization, marketing.

## 1. Data and Methodology

The „father „of thoughts of cognitive and dysfunctional schemes can be considered by A. T. Beck, who became aware of psychology through his cognitive theory of depression.

Beck (1979) has described his cognitive schemes as a summary of basis, often unannounced and unconscious assumptions about what a person is, what is world around him and what he can expect from him. Beck considers thought schemes as stable cognitive formulas by which one interprets his experience.

On the Beck’s theory of dysfunctional cognitive schemes was made a mathematical – statistical analysis of data by several methods of descriptive statistics and methods of inductive statistics T – test for independent samples helped us to the realization of the expected accuracy of the hypotheses which we have formulated.

**2. Results and discussion**

The sample of survey was formed by 105 respondents. From this was surveyed 37 men (35.2%) and 68 women (68%). The education of respondents was in two cases at the same level. Secondary education with a ratio of 47 respondents (44.80%), university education of the same number of 47 respondents (44.80%) and 11 (10.4%) were sample of basic education. The work placement of respondents ranges across a wide range of options. The 105 interviewees was formed by 8 managers (7.60%) and 18 executives, which is (17.10%). Maximum of our scale forms 74 students (70.50%), one pensionary (1%) and the unemployed people were 4 respondents (3.8%). The age of respondents was ranged across a broad age structure of population. The minimum age of people was 18 years old and the maximum age of participants around 62 years

Results data were analysed and implemented in statistical software SPSS 20. According to a pre-processed questionnaire, we observed the occurrence of gender differences between men and women. The results confirmed gender differences between men and women in six surveyed questions, which we identified at managers (table 1).

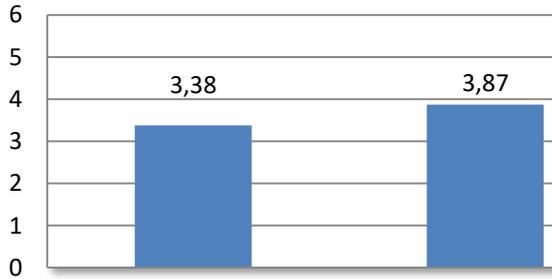
Tab. 1: A comparison of manager responses

	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>T test</b>	<b>Significance</b>
<b>When taking a decision in non – working life, I am not wrong.</b>	1	3.38	2.252	.026
	2	3.87		
<b>I am convinced about infallibility of my own decisions.</b>	1	3.08	2.574	.011
	2	2.46		
<b>I suppose that distortions in cognition are natural.</b>	1	4.57	1.965	.049
	2	4.91		
<b>Distortions correspond to the person who took the decision.</b>	1	4.00	1.971	.043
	2	4.43		
<b>Distortion is inherent risk in deciding to be reckoned with.</b>	1	4.62	2.269	.025
	2	5.04		
<b>Every distortion can be corrected.</b>	1	5.08	2.211	.029
	2	4.54		

(Source: own calculation, SPSS 20)

Examined areas of research:

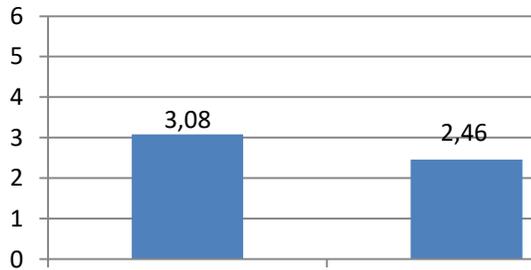
1. Women, on question: “When taking a decision in non – working life, I am not wrong”, expressed a rather weak consensus, on the contrary men tend to be less disappointed (graph 1).



Graph 1 When taking a decision in non – working life, I am not wrong

(Source: own calculation)

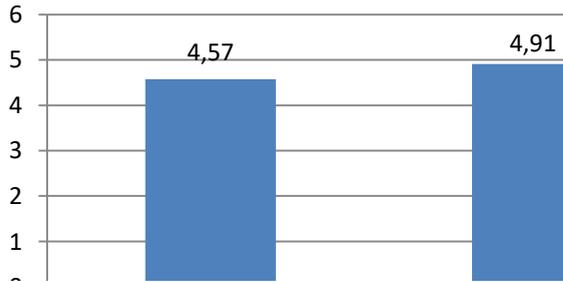
2. By assessing of question: “I am convinced about infallibility of my own decisions”, both, men and women responded to disagreeing side of scale. The statistical significant difference between men and women was found only in disagreement. From this point of view, women expressed a higher degree of disagreement than men (graph 2).



Graph 2 I am convinced about infallibility of my own decisions

(Source: own calculation)

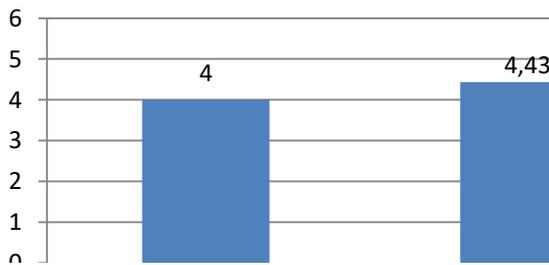
3. The results of mathematical and statistical analysis of question: “I am convinced about infallibility of my own decisions”, both, men and women responded also on disagreement side of the scale. The statistical difference between men and women was found to a higher degree of consensus than disagreement, while women in the proportional scale predominate in their answer (graph 3).



Graph 3 I suppose that distortions in cognition are natural.

(Source: own calculation)

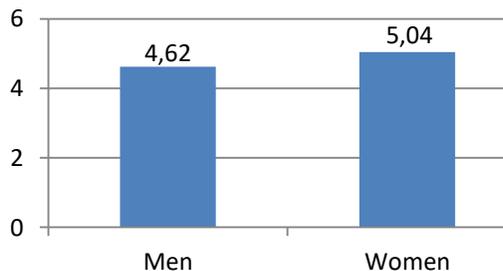
- By assessing of statistical data at the question: “Distortions correspond to person who took the decision”, the responses of the men were on a clear scale – more likely than not and the women in the item – Yes. According to this assertion, the managers move in the ratio of consent (graph 4).



Graph 4 Distortions correspond to the person who took the decision

(Source: own calculation)

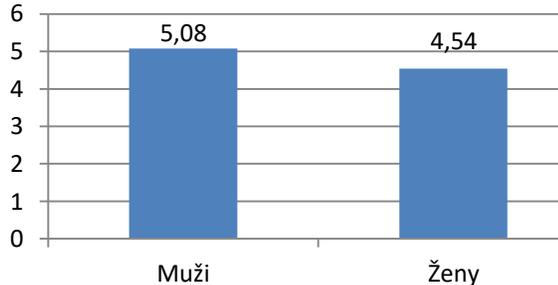
- Under question from table 1: “Distortion is inherent risk in deciding to be reckoned with” both, men and women have expressed a high degree of consent and are more likely to agree in their answers (graph 5).



Graph 5 Distortion is inherent risk in deciding to be reckoned with

(Source: own calculation)

6. Under question from table 1: "Every distortion can be corrected" both, men and women expressed a relatively higher degree of consent, which women are leaning rather on the side of weak approval as disagreement (graph 6).



Graph 6 Every distortion can be corrected

(Source: own calculation)

Mathematical-statistical analyses identified six differences between men and women in managerial work. It points out to the diverse thinking, leadership and planning of managers. In our article we have identified a problem, which currently identifies many differences between men and women. According evaluating of answers from questionnaire we found out that there exist cognitive distortions and between men and woman in managerial work.

Based on the results from the field of cognitive distortions between men and women in the managerial work, we present several suggestions for improving and empowering personality of managers in their work environment.

### Improvement of cognitive distortions of emotional intelligence

It often happens that a person with high intelligence can not to go around with people and fail in normal life situations. Conception of emotional intelligence explains why two people with same intelligence will not reach equal success or fail to do the same. Emotions are an essential element of ours survival and behaviour. There is no direct link between intelligence and emotional intelligence continuity. The fact, that someone achieves high scores in intelligence tests does not guarantee high scores score in EQ. People are so affected and shrouded by own emotions or emotions of his superiors or subordinates, totally forgetting the importance of his judgment in working environment. Such behaviour can lead to negative and important decisions. In order to prevent cognitive distortions in emotional intelligence we suggest bettering:

- ability to motivate and control yourself,
- not give up in work on hard times,
- manage stress and frustration,
- the ability to influence the quality of their thinking,
- empathy.

**Self-regulation** (ability to know your own feelings) - knowing consciousness at the moment of its inception - is one of them base stones EQ. Unless, we are able to realize our true feelings, we are standing to be defenceless against them. People who are sure of their feelings, can do in their lives make better decisions. Only one, who knows why he feels the way he feels is aware of dealing with it with their feelings, can measure and organize them. With self-regulation managers are able to focus on difficult emotional conflicts and situations, which is a significant strengthening of the decision at the right moment.

**Empathy** (sensitivity to the motions of others) - Empathy is the basic "human quality". Feeling a second person requires being accessible with emotion, concentrating to listen and capture unspoken thoughts and feelings. This property with increasing emotional self-awareness is deepening. It can positively affect achievement in managerial work.

### Approaches to Strategic Decision Making

A very important role not only for the company but especially for company managers is strategic decision. When we are deciding, a stress level is draining for the worker. Such stress in certain situations can influence strategic decision making. To predict such situations, we would recommend an individual coaching together with rational approaches. Coaching can be applied in those places, which are subject to cognitive misconduct under the influence of stress and stressful situations. Together with a rational decision-making approach, managers will be convinced that their decision is rational and therefore carry out consistent and effective decisions that represent maximizing value for the entire area of managerial work.

### Improvement of effective interpersonal communication

Interpersonal communication forms are the basis of a communication scheme in every company. With more staff, more managers are expected in the company. The diversity of people demands to more detailed communication at different levels of society. With fast communication, where we need to quickly pass on certain process information, some misinformation may occur, which is the emergence of cognitive distortions. Consequently, the misunderstood information can carry the entire communication scheme and the result may have the opposite meaning as very substance of information. In order to strengthen interpersonal communication between managers and employees, we suggest more effective communication through an interpersonal information system. After introducing an interpersonal information system, we assume:

- significant shortening of the time needed for communication (more time for activities),
- easy to use (people, who never work with computer and information system),
- all workers have the same data (limitation of mistakes),
- information from different source are available in one place in a uniform shape,

### 3. Conclusions

Cognitive distortions in managerial work are a strong indicator of the skills of managers, which they need to use. Behaviour of managers is often under impact of cognitive distortions, which they consider to be correct after a quick and irrational judgement. By analysing of cognitive distortions in managerial work between men and women we have identified several important contexts, which considerably affect managerial competencies. Suggested proposals (improvement of cognitive distortions of emotional intelligence, approaches to Strategic Decision Making, Improvement of effective interpersonal communication) presented, that there is still place for improvement of the managerial work. After applying of these suggestions, managers could perform their work more effectively, more thoroughly and rationally without more serious cognitive distortions.

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