

KRAKOW UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS
College of Management and Quality Sciences

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mgr Klaudia Bracio-Golec

**MANAGING THE POWER ASYMMETRY IN
INTERORGANISATIONAL RELATIONS IN THE INFORMATION
AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY SECTOR IN POLAND**

Doctoral dissertation

PhD Supervisor: Prof. UEK dr hab. Marek Szarucki

Auxiliary PhD Supervisor: dr Oskar Kosch

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Date:

Name and surname:

Statement

I declare that the content of my dissertation entitled "Managing the power asymmetry in interorganisational relations in the Information and Communications Technology sector in Poland" submitted to the JSA (Single Anti-Plagiarism System) is consistent with the versions submitted to the office of the Centre for Doctoral Education and Procedures in printed and electronic form.

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INTRODUCTION

Interorganisational interactions drive action or inaction by shaping the direction of the organisation, influencing its competitive position and leading to the intensification or reduction of new relationships. The development of interorganisational relationships aims to pursue a common interest while maintaining the autonomy and independence necessary to preserve the separate interests of the partners. These issues are the subject of research on interorganisational relationships, which focuses primarily on the characteristics of relationships between individuals, groups and organisations (Lumineau and Oliveira, 2018). Relationship building is a common practice among organisations, as it is through relationships that they interact with the external and internal environment, which also interpenetrate each other. One of the main objectives of building relationships is to identify the stakeholders of an organisation.

As noted in the studies, asymmetric bargaining power not only affects the structure and performance of interorganisational relationships, but this issue has only been partially explored in two studies, Argyres and Bercovitz (2015) and Lumineau and Malhotra (2011). Expanding research on the unilateral blind spot will shed light on why organisations want to continue to participate in asymmetry relationships.

The study addresses **the research gap identified by scholars** who have advocated for further investigation into **the various types and levels of asymmetry that exist between organisations** (Lumineau and Oliveira, 2018). According to Lumineau and Oliveira (2018), despite many advances in the study of interorganisational relations, there are still some areas in the literature that remain to be explored, especially those that ignore its fundamental characteristics. The researchers proposed to examine the underlying assumption of blind spot number 1 which allows for possible contributions to the theory of interorganisational relations in management studies, such as power theory (Emerson, 1962; Selznick, 1949) which is largely concerned with differences and relative dependencies between parties (i.e. relational concepts).

The building of interorganisational relationships takes place in all sectors of the economy, but due to the progression of digitisation, he wants to focus his work on the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) sector in Poland. The ICT sector plays a crucial role in technological development (Świadek et al., 2022). Digitalisation has led to a growing demand for ICT products and services in all sectors of the economy, including consumers, non-governmental organisations and public administration institutions. This trend

is expected to continue as digitalisation becomes more widespread. As a result, the ICT sector will become more important every year.

The research problem addressed in this doctoral dissertation is **the lack of knowledge and research on power asymmetry in interorganisational relations in the ICT sector in Poland, and thus the lack of theoretical models that provide insights into its management.** It should be emphasised that, to the best of the author's knowledge, no research has been conducted to date on the management of power asymmetry in interorganisational relations within the ICT sector in Poland. Thus, the research problem presented above is timely and crucial for advancing of management and quality sciences within the sub-discipline of strategic management, particularly within the research area of interorganisational relations.

This is evident in **the main research question** that this dissertation addresses: **What form should the model of managing the power asymmetry in the interorganisational relationships in the ICT sector in Poland take?** To answer the main research question, six secondary research questions will be explored, as listed below:

SRQ1: What is the specificity of the approach to stakeholder relationships management in interorganisational relations?

SRQ2: What factors determine the power asymmetry in interorganisational relations?

SRQ3: What are the methods and advantages to manage the power asymmetry in interorganisational relations and why is stakeholder relationships management important in the ICT sector?

SRQ4: What are the ways to identify stakeholders of ICT companies and what are the assumptions of model building in interorganisational relations?

SRQ5: Is there a power asymmetry in the interorganisational relations in the companies of the ICT sector in Poland?

SRQ6: Is it possible to build a model of managing the power asymmetry in the interorganisational relationships in the ICT sector in Poland?

The main question indicates the main goal of this dissertation. **The main objective of the doctoral dissertation is to identify the state of power asymmetry and an attempt to build a model of managing the power asymmetry in the interorganisational relationships in the ICT sector in Poland.** In addition to the main objective, the study also aims to address the following secondary research objectives that have been formulated:

SRO1: Identification the advantages of stakeholder relationships management in interorganisational relations.

SRO2: Identification the power asymmetry factors in interorganisational relations.

SRO3: Explanation the methods and advantages of managing power asymmetry and stakeholder relationships management in companies from the ICT sector.

SRO4: Determination how to select stakeholder groups in the ICT sector and identify assumptions for model construction in interorganisational relations.

SRO5: Identification the state of power asymmetry in ICT companies in Poland based on survey data analysis.

SRO6: An attempt to build a model of power asymmetry in interorganisational relations in the ICT sector in Poland.

Thus, the research presented in this doctoral dissertation results from the **scientific and cognitive motivation** to identify, diagnose and manage the power asymmetry and to develop a model of managing the power asymmetry in the interorganisational relationships in the ICT sector in Poland.

Chapter 1 of this doctoral dissertation describes the above issues in relation to interorganisational relationships and networks, as networks are the vehicle for interorganisational relationships. This chapter also describes stakeholder theory, enriched with an analysis of stakeholder types and the specifics of approaches to managing them. The benefits of managing stakeholder relationships are also outlined. It is important to note the Chapter 1 is based on a narrative literature review.

Chapter 2 of this dissertation describes the phenomenon of power as a socially constructed phenomenon and its determinants. The next subsection outlines description of the phenomenon of power asymmetry in its structural and behavioural variety, and also how the phenomenon of power is described in the management sciences. Organisations use this phenomenon consciously and unconsciously, therefore the last subsection of this chapter describes the importance of power asymmetry in interorganisational relations. Depending on the sector in which an organisation operates, and therefore the stakeholders that influence the organisation, the approach to managing power asymmetry may differ. It is important to note the Chapter 2 combines various publications in an integrative literature review.

Chapter 3 describes the models for managing power asymmetry. The next subsection outlines the specificity of companies in the ICT sector in Poland, and the final subsection describes the characteristics of the mechanism of asymmetric relations between companies in the ICT sector in Poland. It is important to note the Chapter 3 uses a systematic literature review because it was possible to define the scope precisely.

Chapter 4 first describes the study survey assumptions and design. It then outlines the methodological assumptions for building a model of power asymmetry and identifying the most important stakeholders in the ICT sector in Poland based on the Stakeholder Saliency Model.

Therefore, based on the previous theoretical chapters, **a survey of 200 representatives of ICT companies in Poland with 10 or more employees was analysed** in the next chapter. Thus, **Chapter 5** is empirical in nature and presents the results of the research, including the identification of participants, the identification of key external stakeholders in the ICT sector in Poland. The next subsection outlines the in-depth analysis of the survey data in the context of stakeholder study and relations study using quantitative research and methods. The summary of this chapter presents the findings on whether there is a power asymmetry in the interorganisational relations between companies in the ICT sector in Poland.

Chapter 6 presents the identification of power asymmetry in the context of stakeholders in the ICT sector in Poland according to their saliency using the Stakeholder Saliency Model and the analysis of the relationship between key external stakeholders and companies in the ICT sector in Poland. This chapter presents an attempt to build a model to manage the power asymmetry in the interorganisational relationships in the ICT sector in Poland. **The model aims to reflect the actual approach to dealing with asymmetry between organisations, using a mapping model with a morphological shape.** This model is of theoretical, methodological and practical value, and provide an original solution to the research problem.

In order to organise the research questions and scientific objectives with the assigned chapters of this dissertation, I have created a table (see Table 1) to show the structure of the work.

Table 1. Research questions and objectives with assigned chapters

Research questions	Research objectives	Chapter
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SRQ1: What is the specificity of the approach to stakeholder relationships management in interorganisational relations?	SRO1: Identification the advantages of stakeholder relationships management in interorganisational relations.	1
SRQ2: What factors determine the power asymmetry in interorganisational relations?	SRO2: Identification of the power asymmetry factors in interorganisational relations.	2
SRQ3: What are the methods and advantages to manage the power asymmetry in interorganisational relations and why is stakeholder relationships management important in the ICT sector?	SRO3: Explanation the methods and advantages of managing power asymmetry and stakeholder relationships management in companies from the ICT sector.	3
SRQ4: What are the ways to identify stakeholders of ICT companies and what are the assumptions of model building in interorganisational relations?	SRO4: Determination how to select stakeholder groups in the ICT sector and identify assumptions for model construction in interorganisational relations.	4
SRQ5: Is there a power asymmetry in the interorganisational relations in the companies of the ICT sector in Poland?	SRO5: Identification the state of power asymmetry in ICT companies in Poland based on survey data analysis.	5
SRQ6: Is it possible to build a model of managing the power asymmetry in the interorganisational relationships in the ICT sector in Poland?	SRO6: An attempt to build a model of power asymmetry in interorganisational relations in the ICT sector in Poland.	6
Main research question: What form should the model of managing the power asymmetry in the interorganisational relationships in the ICT sector in Poland take?	Main research objective: To identify the state of power asymmetry and an attempt to build a model of managing the power asymmetry in the interorganisational relationships in the ICT sector in Poland.	5 and 6

Source: own study.

Chapter 1

INTERORGANISATIONAL RELATIONS – A STAKEHOLDER APPROACH

1.1. Introduction

At present, the market conditions force contemporary organisations to achieve their goals by building interorganisational relationships. This makes it possible to implement and achieve goals more efficiently and quickly, which would otherwise be difficult, slow or impossible because of various limitations. Due to the dynamic environment, organisations often choose strategies of cooperation with other entities that are part of their environment. As a result of these collaborative processes, there is integration between organisations, which blurs organisational boundaries. Currently, it is much more difficult to identify the processes that take place "outside" or "inside" a given organisation, which means that interorganisational relations have emerged as a distinct area in management sciences. The subject of interest in interorganisational relations is the relations between independent entities – organisations. Due to the growing importance of a given topic related to organisational relations, as well as its interdisciplinary nature, it is likely that it will appear more and more often as a subject of research in research projects solving many practical and theoretical problems.

The aim of this chapter is to answer the first additional research question (SRQ1) posed in this study: What is the specificity of the approach to stakeholder relationships management in interorganisational relations? In order to comprehensively answer the formulated research question, reflections on a number of issues are necessary (they are discussed in individual subchapters).

The chapter will begin with a description of interorganisational relations for a better understanding. A narrative literature review will be used as the research method. The subsequent sections will cover the stages of building, cultivating, and destroying relationships between organisations. The next section will describe stakeholder theory, as stakeholders are the carriers of interorganisational relationships. The last section will present the types of company stakeholders in interorganisational relations. Formulating an answer to the research

question presented will achieve the supporting objective of identification the advantages of stakeholder relationships management in interorganisational relations.

1.2. Interorganisational relationships – a narrative literature review

In the field of management theory, interorganisational relations (IORs) are one of the main areas of interest. Interorganisational relationships¹ are the structured and enduring forms of interactions, transactions, information flows, resources and other contacts that arise between two or more organisations or between an organisation(s) and its environment (Oliver, 1990). Interorganisational relationships are configurations consisting of combining the resources of two or possibly more independent organisations to jointly create value (Gulati, 1998). Research on interorganisational relationships allows to understand the characteristics of the relationship, such as the nature, patterns, effects or its basis (Cropper et al. 2008).

The work of organisations is becoming more complicated due to the quantity and variety of interactions. Complex situations require the involvement of many cooperating organisations, although cooperation should not be a desirable strategy for solving common problems between organisations in all situations (Hardy and Phillips, 1998). Moreover, cooperation is a riskier form of doing business than acting alone (Czakon, 2007). However, it should be emphasised that when operating in a multi-stakeholder environment, collaboration is a necessary phenomenon (Uhr, 2017). This complexity highlights the elements of interdependence that exist between organisations themselves and with other non-organisational stakeholders.

No company can operate independently of its stakeholders (Freeman, 1984). Good relationships with stakeholders can help organisations respond to many problems and crises and influence their recovery processes. Satisfaction resulting from good relationships is also a very important aspect of such relationships (Vinhas et al., 2012). The literature increasingly describes the use of interorganisational relationships to achieve stated organisational goals (Dooley et al., 2016). It also works in the opposite direction, in that poor relationships with stakeholders can negatively impact and hinder corrective processes. Relationships, both good and bad, are subjective concepts that mean different things to different people and organisations. Grunig, Grunig and Ehling (1992) recognised that there are seven (subjective) variables that most parties in a relationship consider important in evaluating a relationship:

¹ I will use the terms– "interorganisational relations " and "interorganisational relationships" interchangeably. See Oliver(1990).

1. Trust – when both parties trust each other,
2. Mutual understanding – when both parties understand each other,
3. Mutuality – when both parties feel the relationship is balanced,
4. Mutual legitimacy – when both parties recognize each other's existence,
5. Credibility – when both parties perceive each other as credible,
6. Mutual satisfaction – when both parties are satisfied with the relationship,
7. Openness – when both parties are open to each other (Grunig et al., 1992, p. 83)

While the above characteristics are important, they may not be sufficient to build a lasting relationship between organisations. It is argued below that organisations operating from a stakeholder perspective should formulate strategic recommendations that take into account the interests and expectations of key stakeholders.

Despite many advances in the study of interorganisational relations, there are still some areas in the literature that remain to be explored, especially those that ignore its fundamental characteristics. A study carried out by Lumineau and Oliveira (2018), which synthesised all research on interorganisational relations at the turn of the millennium, revealed four blind spots in the field. The researchers propose to look at the underlying assumption of blind spot number 1, which allows for possible contributions to the theory of interorganisational relations in management studies, such as power theory (Emerson, 1962; Selznick, 1949), which is largely concerned with differences and relative dependencies between parties (i.e. relational concepts).

According to the Lumineau and Oliveira (2018) and van Marrewijk, Ybema, Smits, Clegg and Pitsis (2016) a diverse perspective is particularly important in the study as the growing number of IORs include many different stakeholders from different sectors, such as interorganisational project networks. The study of the above-mentioned blind spot will provide a new perspective on the theoretical mechanisms involved in the functioning of interorganisational relationships (Lumineau and Oliveira, 2018). Moreover, prior literature suggests that differences in size between organisations, such as small and large companies, can influence each company's perceptions of uncertainty, dependency, and risk within interorganisational relations (Lumineau and Oliveira, 2018).

As noted in the study, asymmetric bargaining power not only affects the structure and performance of interorganisational relationships, but this issue has only been partially explored in two studies, Argyres and Bercovitz (2015) and Lumineau and Malhotra (2011). Expanding

research on the unilateral blind spot will shed light on why organisations want to continue to participate in asymmetric relationships.

In order to provide an in-depth substantive analysis of interorganisational relationships, a narrative review of the literature was undertaken. The purpose of a narrative review is to identify studies that describe the problem that researchers are interested in. The narrative reviews do not have a predetermined research question or search strategy, only a topic of interest (Juntunen and Lehenkari 2021). Narrative reviews offer more potential for personal insights and more opportunities for speculation than different literature review approaches.

Research on interorganisational relationships concentrates primarily on the characteristics of relationships between individuals, groups and between organisations (Alter, 1990). Research also focuses on the background to a given relationship, the developmental processes that take place in the organisation, and the outcomes that have resulted from different forms of relationships. Furthermore, it examines the consequences of the interorganisational links of these organisations within their network of relationships.

A network is a system of connections between people or organisational units, created to exchange information, ideas (concepts) and resources (Lachiewicz and Zakrzewska-Bielawska, 2012), while interorganisational relationships are long-term relationships between organisations (e.g. customers, suppliers, competitors, public sector organisations and trade associations) that have come together to pursue a common interest, while remaining autonomous and independent to maintain separate interests (Ebers, 2001). They usually take the form of a long-term partnership or procurement agreement, a consortium, or possibly a joint venture or alliance. Researchers studying interorganisational relations are usually interested in forms of cooperation such as clusters, zones, alliances, associations, clusters, joint ventures, companies or networks (Cropper et al. 2008; Nakamura, 2005). Due to the practical dimension of the topic and its strong roots in practice, the language used in practice is also permeated with references to cooperation between organisations. This proves that a certain area was and is deeply rooted in practice or, as some claim, even grows out of it (Latusek-Jurczak, 2014). The practical dimension of the subject of interorganisational cooperation allows it to be transferred into the language of business and academic literature, business work and everyday conversations between managers, which contributes to a broader understanding of a given research area as well as to greater interest in the subject. Nevertheless, it can be difficult for researchers to describe a given topic in theoretical terms. From the point of view of management sciences, the beginning of research in the area of interorganisational relations, and in particular

cooperation between organisations, is considered to be 60's (Barringer and Harrison, 2000; Bertalanffy, 1968; Koźmiński, 1972). It was then that the organisation was placed in the context and realm of surrounding systems and connections, as well as external and internal influences, which contributed to the description of management challenges. Interorganisational relationships can be easily justified by different theoretical foundations, although each paradigm alone seems insufficient to capture and show the nature and complexity of interorganisational relationships (Oliver, 1990).

Although there are a number of theoretical approaches to the study of interorganisational relationships, the authors of most of them have pointed out that the patterns of interaction that occur between organisations constitute a distinct form that is part of the environment external to the organisation itself (Alter, 1990). Based on the literature on interorganisational relationships, six critical cases and reasons have been identified that encourage organisations to form relationships with others: necessity, asymmetry, reciprocity, efficiency, stability and legitimacy (Oliver, 1990).

The perspective that dominated in management sciences in the 1970s was based on phenomena that took place primarily within the organisation. Cooperation was discussed only in terms of the optimal allocation of resources. One of the reasons for this was that the then very influential school of transaction costs (costs of coordinating the activities of the company resulting from the cooperation of many economic entities in the market) (Coase, 1937; Williamson, 1975) significantly limited the possibility of a broader emergence of different research trends. Moreover, the emergence of a specific field of research related to interorganisation relations was linked to a specific theory. At the outset, it was pointed out that there are two distinct forms of coordination: the company (based on concentration and hierarchy) and the market (based on openness and competition). O. Williamson, one of the founders of the transaction costs school, noted that the market and the firm do not exhaust all the ways of coordinating activities in the economy observed in practice, since it is possible to distinguish in practice both non-market and non-hierarchical forms of cooperation (Williamson, 2002). It was only at the end of the 1980s that the theory of transaction costs began to be criticised, as it was considered to be an incomplete proposal and unable to withstand the confrontation with reality (Ketokivi and Mahoney, 2016; Zenger et al., 2011). In addition, critiques of the hierarchy-market dichotomy have also emerged, one of which focused on the concept of embeddedness (Granovetter, 1985), which proved to be important for the analysis

of interorganisational relations. The above-mentioned concept of social rooting of economic activities is based on three fundamental assumptions (Granovetter, 1985):

- Parties prefer interactions with those they already know rather than with strangers,
- Newly formed ties are rooted in other existing ties,
- Pre-existing ties influence the development of new ties.

The above assumptions are very important for the issue of interorganisational networks because they emphasise the inevitable relational aspect of any action and indicate that any action, regardless of the will of the decision-makers, always has a relational aspect, i.e. it creates new ties or refers to existing ones and affects them. The next trend, which is negative towards the theory of transaction costs, is also very important for interorganisational relations. This trend is based on a new institutionalism, which is based on Williamson's first thoughts on indirect forms of coordination. The most significant work in this trend was an article by Powell (1990), in which he proposed the introduction of networks as a third form of coordination of economic activities, separate from and outside the hierarchy and the market. A summary and comparison of the three forms of coordination, i.e. market, hierarchy and network, is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. A summary and comparison of the three forms of coordination of economic activities

Characteristics	A form of coordination of economic activities		
	Market	Hierarchy	Network
Normative basis	Contract, ownership	Employee relations based on the contract	Complementary potentials, strengths
Ways of communication	Price	Routines	Relations
Conflict resolution methods	Price dispute, appeal to the court to enforce the terms of the contract	Administrative decrees, oversight	Reciprocity standards and respect for reputation
Degree of flexibility	High	Short	Medium
The degree of involvement between the parties	High	Medium to high	Medium to high

The atmosphere/vibe of the relationship	Accuracy and/or Suspicion	Formal, bureaucratic	Openness, focus on mutual benefits
Preferences or choice of relationship between the parties	Independence	Dependence	Interdependence
The presence of elements of other types of transactions	Recurring commercial transactions	Informal organisation	The presence of a hierarchy
	Contracts as hierarchical documents	Market-like features: profit centres, transfer pricing	Multiple partners
			Formal rules

Source: W.W. Powell (1990, p. 300).

Networking is a form in which the relationships established between the parties involved are important. They can be examined primarily by using qualitative criteria and are used to evaluate the study of the commitment between the parties according to the concept proposed by Powell. Network cooperation consists in obtaining mutual benefits for the partners in a given relationship. Various mechanisms are responsible for the durability and cohesion of the network, ranging from reputation, trust, reciprocity and interdependence (Larson, 1992). The topics related to interorganisational relations are very eclectic in nature, issues of a very diverse and varied nature are discussed within them. In order to systematise the knowledge in this field, it may be useful to have a criterion to differentiate the research considerations, which will allow an attempt to classify them. This approach has been used by Cropper, Ebers, Hexham and Ring (2008), who in their work have identified them in a specific research area, focusing mainly on the four themes presented in Table 3. Interorganisational relations are examined in terms of properties, as well as showing general patterns of relations between organisations. Scientists are also interested in their origin, the establishment of their processes, the attempt to maintain these relationships, dissolving and changing them, as well as the consequences resulting from the formation of such relationships (Cropper et al., 2008).

The area of interest in the research, has been classified under the field of organisation, concerns individual enterprises, or also collective entities that join the cooperation with other entities (Krechowicz, 2022). The most important characteristics in such studies are previous experience in interorganisational cooperation, age, activity in a particular industry or sector, affiliation of the organisation to the public or private sector, and the competences of the

organisation. In the area of forms of interorganisational cooperation, the basic characteristics that can be taken into account in research are the sectoral or geographical distribution of the partners (e.g. research on industrial clusters or regional cooperation), the number of partners in cooperation (from pairs to multilateral networks) or the density of links between the entities involved in cooperation or the position of the organisation in the network.

In this area of research on interorganisational relations, it is possible to examine the ties that bind the entities involved in the relationship. This is conditioned by the need to collect all data from each of the parties involved in the relationship. The types of links can be distinguished on the basis of their interaction or non-interaction. Various attributes characterising interactional relationships are the subject of empirical research, including coordination mechanisms (e.g. informal and formal ties), relationship content (knowledge of the content of resources is helpful for its analysis), relationship structure (e.g. strength and multifaceted nature of ties), the tendency to close or open cooperation networks) (Oliveira and Lumineau, 2019).

In the area of interorganisational relations, two dimensions of context can be distinguished and specific examples of such research can be given. On the micro level, the focus is on structures and the characteristics of the members of the individual organisations involved in the cooperation (Kroeger, 2011). For example, personal relationships at the supervisory level that develop within interorganisational relationships or interpersonal relationships between organisations, or working teams formed from members of cooperating organisations. At the macro level, the focus is on what is conventionally called the environment in which interorganisational cooperation operates. Thus, research in this area will address issues such as the political, legal, geographical and cultural aspects of cooperation. Historical analyses are also recommended to see how changing environmental conditions have influenced interorganisational cooperation projects.

A processual perspective is needed to capture the dynamics of cooperation in constitutive processes, which is important in the analysis of interorganisational relations. Empirical research explores areas such as innovation in interorganisational relations, interorganisational learning, trust building and meaning making (also see Table 3 for other topics). For example, studies dealing with the processes of meaning formation are targeted, in the study of changes in interorganisation relations over time (Whetten, 1981). This study of the evolution of interorganisational relations is similar to the life-cycle concept, but in the context of interorganisational relations.

Table 3. Considerations of research in the area of interorganisational relations

Research consideration	Examples of topics covered	Publications
Organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperation of organisations of different sizes • Cooperation of organisations from various industries and sectors • Cooperation of organisations with different cultures • Cooperation of organisations from different countries • Cooperation of companies with a recognized position on the market with new entities 	Castañer and Oliveira (2020), Klincewicz (2006), Nogalski and Grzybowski (2008), Saxenian (1994), Lee et al. (2000), Gulati (1995)
Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The way in which cooperation is formalised • Research on interactive and non-interactive relationships • Power relations in the cooperation process • Dominant ways of management • Relationship content - types of flows between organisations 	Kamalaldin, Linde, Sjödin and Parida (2020), Bachmann and Zaheer (2006), Dworzecki and Żłobińska (2002), Uzzi (1997), Ring and van de Ven (1992)
Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influence of geographical location • Influence of cultural and institutional environment on cooperation • Influence of external entities on cooperation • Influence of available infrastructure on cooperation 	Keckés (2017), Dworzecki (2002), Krupski (2005), Powell et al. (1996), Oxley (1999)
Constitutive Processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sources of interorganisational cooperation • Trajectories of cooperation processes • Reasons for termination of cooperation • Evolution of coordination structures over time 	Stańczyk, Klimas, Sachpazidu, Nadolny and Kuźmiński (2022), Czakon (2007), Romanowska and Trocki (2004), Ring and van de Ven (1994)

Source: own elaboration based on Cropper, Ebers, Huxham, and Ring (2008 pp. 9–10)².

According to Knoke (2012), interorganisational networks that emerge between individuals, organisations or groups reveal general patterns that create, change and support such relationships. The study of interorganisational relationships and networks is usually carried out in two approaches, i.e. the study of a set of characteristics describing the nature of the relationship and the nature of the relationship describing the related organisations (Knoke, 2012).

The reasons why firms engage in interorganisational relationships are usually very diverse (Glaister and Buckley, 1996). Some work together to reduce competition in an industry

² Other sources cited after the author.

or sector by conspiring against a common rival or rivals, or work with a competitor to turn an adversary into a business partner. Others co-operate to gain new opportunities and resources that improve their competitiveness. This may be through faster market entry, access to other markets or improved products. Furthermore, building relationships between organisations can reduce costs, for example through joint marketing and research or production, economies of scale or specialisation. Specialisation allows the firm to specialise in one or more stages of production and, by working with a partner, to supply the final product to the market. As a result, the company does not need to be responsible for the entire supply chain.

It is worth noting that creating interorganisational relationships is often seen as one of the ways to learn effectively and quickly, allowing the organisation to reduce the time needed to acquire knowledge. Another advantage of improving and creating interorganisational relations is a faster and more effective flow of information and resources between the co-operating companies. This also reduces costs and helps to save time. In addition, the creation of international relationships allows for the reduction of uncertainty and risk, which is directly related to the distribution of financial risk in the case of willingness to invest in new technologies (Nohria and Eccles, 1992).

There are different forms of interorganisational relationships, both formal and informal. They differ in the organisational or contractual arrangements that co-operating firms use to regulate the relationship between them. There are forms of cooperation that result from the division of decision-making and ownership rights between enterprises, as well as those that result from coordination mechanisms. Research in this area shows more hierarchical, market-based and hybrid forms of management (Ebers, 1997). Different conceptualisations are based, among other things, on the motives of collaborators, the principles, norms and processes that characterise cooperation, or the types of resource interdependencies that exist between collaborating organisations.

Collaboration has a variety of implications for organisations, depending on the specific rationale and design of the relationship. Studies have shown that relationship-based organisations not only increase their innovation through mutual learning, but also increase their resource base and capabilities through privileged access to their partners' resources and expertise, further improve their cost position through better coordination of interdependencies and cost-saving production and enhance their reputation by working with reputable partners (Oliver, 2009). In addition to the positive consequences of interorganisational cooperation, firms may experience competitive disruption as a result of faster learning or imitation by their

partners. In addition, there may be a lock-in effect of cooperation, which may reduce access to adaptability due to partners' investments or reduced access to new information. There are studies that have examined the consequences of interorganisational relationships, for example by examining the stability and termination of interorganisational relationships (Doz and Hamel, 1998).

Many theories and approaches have been used to study the effects of firms entering into interorganisational relationships. These include: management perspective theory, strategic management, resource dependence theory, industrial marketing and purchasing, organisational economics theory, evolutionary theory, neo-institutional theory and critical perspectives (Ebers, 2001). The management perspective in interorganisational relations is based on a series of activities carried out by a team of individuals with different abilities and skills that shape the direction of the cooperative organisations and allocate and implement resources appropriately for this purpose (Huxham and Vangen, 2005). The main methods used to study interorganisational relations are surveys and case studies. Experiments and simulations as well as cross-sectional studies are still rather rarely used.

In 2019, interorganisational relations were added as a new thematic area within the sub-discipline of strategic management in Poland in management and quality sciences (Bełz et al., 2019). It is worth mentioning that in the last decades the interest in various aspects of strategic management has increased among scientists (Kosch and Szarucki, 2021). Regarding the scope of strategic management within management and quality sciences, it should be noted that some publications refer to areas or fields in which management and quality sciences are or were a scientific discipline (e.g.: Sagan, 2016), sometimes also within the sub-disciplines of management and quality sciences (e.g. marketing management: Sagan, 2018) - these levels above and below are not the subject of this work (Bełz et al, 2019; Cyfert et al, 2014; Lisiński and Szarucki, 2020). The theory of strategic management is based on the exchange and allocation of information and resources within interorganisational relationships and further explores how interorganisational relationships can be used to improve the profitability and behaviour of the firm (Jarillo, 1993). Researchers in resource dependence theory view the interorganisational relationship as a way of securing needed resources and increasing control over the supply of resources. Researchers are interested in power relations and effective management. Researchers in industrial marketing and purchasing primarily study how resources, information and social interdependencies change the collaborating organisations' approach to technological collaboration (Hakansson and Snehota, 1995).

The organisational economics approach, on the other hand, is primarily based on the theory of agency or transaction costs and offers a comparative assessment of different forms of interorganisational relationships. Evolutionary researchers explain the processes of emergence, displacement, maintenance and destruction of interorganisational relationships. They also engage in analyses using the general conceptual framework of variation, selection and retention (Carroll and Hannan, 2000). In the theory associated with neo-institutionalism, research on legitimation pressures, social institutions and institutional behaviour have shaped the ways in which interorganisational relations operate (Strang and Sine, 2002). A critical perspective approach examines interorganisational relations and how asymmetric power relationships between organisations and divergent interests, including the political use of language, shape organisational relationships and influence organisational performance (Hardy and Phillips, 1998).

Interorganisational networks are a key focus in organisational theory and management, encompassing two main dimensions (Gulati and Gargiulo, 1999). First, they are studied in terms of the structure of cooperation between entities, referred to as nodes or vertices in network analysis. Second, they are examined in terms of the entities formed through interorganisational cooperation, which aim to achieve common goals. These entities are known as network organisations. In the scientific literature, we can find the information that the beginning of the 21st century in management can be considered as the era of the network organisation (Czakov, 2012). They include a network of companies or other entities linked by a system of common goals (Światowiec-Szczepańska, 2013).

There are several defining characteristics of network organisations:

- coherence, it describes the degree of intensification of relations between individual elements of the network and their nature;
- combination potential, it describes the type and number of elements of the basic structure, entering into relationships with other elements of the structure and creating new elements;
- method of activation, describes the method of distribution of powers to initiate activities within the network (Barczak and Białkiewicz 2012, p. 86).

According to Thorelli, an interorganisational network is a system involving two or more organisations linked by a long-term relationship (Thorelli, 1986). In order to clarify the concept of interorganisational networks, they can be defined as voluntarily created systems established

for the achievement of common goals by a group of economic actors, as well as public and private institutions, linked by relationships aimed at interaction with the environment (Barczak and Bialkiewicz 2012). Economic networks of connections exhibit the following characteristics:

- companies, institutions of the business environment, research and development units and representatives of local government;
- formal or informal relationships;
- relations between entities in the network are usually of a cooperative nature, but apart from cooperation there may also be rivalry;
- competitive relations are also constitutive of the network;
- the type of system in which competitive and cooperative ties coexist is cooperation or competition;
- a sense of separateness from entities outside the network among the actors in the network;
- the activity of the network elements is similar in terms of the field of activity;
- the entities in the network have a common goal that they seek to achieve through cooperation.

The literature on networks is very diverse. In the literature on interorganisational networks, it is possible to draw up a catalogue of characteristics of interorganisational networks. The results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Areas of research on interorganisational relations

Areas of interorganisational relations	Characteristics
Striving for cooperation (relational rent)	Entities in the network retain decision-making autonomy in the cooperation process. In some cases, their partners may also be competitors in certain areas
Use of mechanisms of market coordination of activities	In the context of network cooperation, transaction costs are minimised by using non-contractual methods of coordination or by using contracts as a supplement to other coordination mechanisms
Increased innovation potential	Innovativeness can concern both the methods of managing cooperation and coordinating activities, and the outcomes (products) of cooperation.
A community of goals	Shared goals usually lead to a high degree of reciprocity in relationships and a large role for trust as a coordination mechanism

No dominant role of capital links	The absence of capital ties implies the autonomy of units within the network; in the case of significant capital ties, one can speak of a new entity (e.g. a network organisation) created as a result of cooperation.
Low level of vertical integration and hierarchy	In the network, the costs associated with hierarchy as a coordination mechanism are almost eliminated, while the network participants are characterised by diverse competences and resources, which are usually complementary.
Market flexibility	Compared to other methods of coordination, the network structure is characterised by high flexibility and high possibilities for rapid adaptation to changes.

Source: Niemczyk and Jasiński (2012 p. 12).

The trend of cooperation between organisations is increasingly significant, and building networks offer a relatively coherent response to this trend (Gulati et al., 2010). In turn, value is much more often created as a result of emerging cooperation processes, primarily at the interface of cooperating organisations (Obłój, 2002). The most important and considered basic factors contributing to the formation of interorganisational relations are (Mesjasz, 1995; Oliver, 1990):

- a) external requirements (legal and other formal requirements);
- b) inequality (asymmetry) of the importance of the organisation;
- c) mutual benefits;
- d) striving for increased efficiency;
- e) the need for stability (predictability) of operating conditions;
- f) increasing the credibility of the organisation.

Table 5. Relations between types of interorganisational relationships and factors

TYPE OF RELATIONSHIP	FACTORS				
	Unequal importance of organisations	Mutual benefit	Striving for efficiency gains	Need for stability of operating conditions	Increasing the credibility of the organisation
Commercial arrangements	Facilitating pressure on central and local administration units	Joint promotion (e.g. fairs, exhibitions)	Obtaining economic benefits	Reduction of environmental uncertainty, e.g. through product standardization	Improving the image of the parties to the agreement

Alliance of non-profit organisations	Improving fundraising opportunities	Coordination of networks of cooperating organisations	Savings in fundraising and spending	Stabilisation of the flow of resources to affiliated organisations	Increased importance of the organisation in the local community
Joint venture	Increasing market impact	Creating synergies in technology and information exchange	Increasing economies of scale	Risk sharing when entering new markets	Increasing importance within the industry (sector)
Joint program	Controlling access to resources	Facilitating the exchange of clients and staff	Reducing costs of services provided	Risk sharing when launching new programs	Demonstrating standards and principles of cooperation
Company-financial institution relationship	Gaining influence over sources of capital	Gaining influence over sources of capital	Reducing the cost of seeking capital	Co-opting representatives from financial institutions	Exposure to financial credibility
Relationships between beneficiary and sponsor	Increased relevance compared to other beneficiaries	Facilitation of information exchange	Rationalization sourcing funds	Reducing uncertainty of fund flows	Increased recognition and prestige of the beneficiary organisation

Source: Mesjasz (1995 p. 13).

The factors leading to the formation of interorganisational relations listed in Table 5 may act individually or in combination. In cases where the formation of interorganisational relations is influenced by multiple factors, we can observe either synergy, which strengthens the influence, or dyssynergy, which weakens it (Piekarcz, 1991). Some factors may even exist in correlation with others, e.g. when the formation of interorganisational relationships is influenced by the asymmetry of the organisation's importance along with reciprocity (Pfeffer and Salancik 1978).

In order to enable the creation of value at the interface between two organisations, it is crucial to ask about the reasons and motivations for entering into a relationship with partners. It is extremely difficult to find a satisfactory answer to this question because interorganisational management as a field of research is very eclectic and interdisciplinary due to the variety of types of relationships, forms of cooperation, and types of organisations that enter into relationships. According to researchers, six reasons and motivations of interorganisational relations can be distinguished (Fiedler and Deegan 2007; Oliver 1990; Oliver and Ebers 1998). These reasons have been distinguished on the assumption that organisations make conscious decisions to build relationships with other organisations and are discussed in Table 6. These reasons can coexist but, one of them is sufficient for the existence of relationships between

organisations. However, instances of cooperation may be motivated by more than one of these reasons, and these reasons may also interact.

Table 6. Reasons and motivations for the formation of interorganisational relations

Reasons and motivations	Characteristics
Necessity	Organisations may form relationships with other entities due to coercion, such as obligations imposed on them by higher authorities. This form of power is often wielded by state authorities, industry organisations or regulators. Over time, these coercive relationships may evolve to encompass broader and more profound areas of cooperation.
Asymmetry	Interorganisational cooperation is frequently motivated by one party's interest in controlling the activities or resources of the other. This type of cooperation is driven by the desire to exert influence. The power dynamics at play in such relationships can yield both adverse effects, such as the exploitation of the weaker partner's resources, as well as beneficial outcomes, for instance, the expansion of resources for the stronger partner despite the power asymmetry.
Reciprocity	Reciprocity is the phenomenon where, in contrast to asymmetry, resource scarcity leads to cooperation rather than competition. Reciprocity is driven by the motivation for cooperation and coordination, where each participant benefits from the relationship, leading to the establishment of interorganisational relationships aimed at achieving common interests and goals.
Efficiency	Interorganisational relations are formed through cooperative efforts aimed at enhancing organisational efficiency. This trend aligns with the classic transaction costs theory, which is also based on similar assumptions.
Stability	Organisations often seek to mitigate environmental uncertainties by engaging in collaborations with other entities. This strategic approach aims to enhance stability, credibility, and predictability, ultimately improving overall organisational functionality.
Legitimization	Legitimization is a common driver for interorganisational cooperation, aimed at gaining recognition within the organisation and particularly in the external environment. Consequently, the effort to legitimate is influenced by the organisation's environment. These efforts may include activities to enhance reputation, shape a particular image or brand, and gain prestige. The legitimacy motive operates within relationships involving participants at different levels within the network.

Source: own elaboration based on Oliver (1990 pp. 243-246).

The table above (Table 6) outlines the reasons and motivations for creating interorganisational relationships, one of which may be the reason for creating interorganisational relationships, which does not mean that they cannot occur together and contribute to the creation of even closer relationships between organisations. Establishing enduring relationships requires an understanding of fundamental principles and guidelines that facilitate their formation, maintenance, and dissolution.

1.3. Building, nurturing and destroying interorganisational relationships

Defining and understanding the purpose of the relationship is fundamental in building and nurturing any interorganisational relationship. It is also crucial to understand the stakeholder links between the organisations that are involved in a given interorganisational relationship. Moreover, defining and demonstrating the types of links between organisations will also be helpful in determining the role played by the parties in this relationship. There is a model of Grunig and Hunt's organisational linkage model (see Figure 1), used for stakeholder mapping (Grunig and Hunt, 1984). In a given model, stakeholders can be grouped depending on the affiliation of given stakeholders to the organisation. Once the types of linkages are established, the next step is to establish and nurture interorganisational relationships.

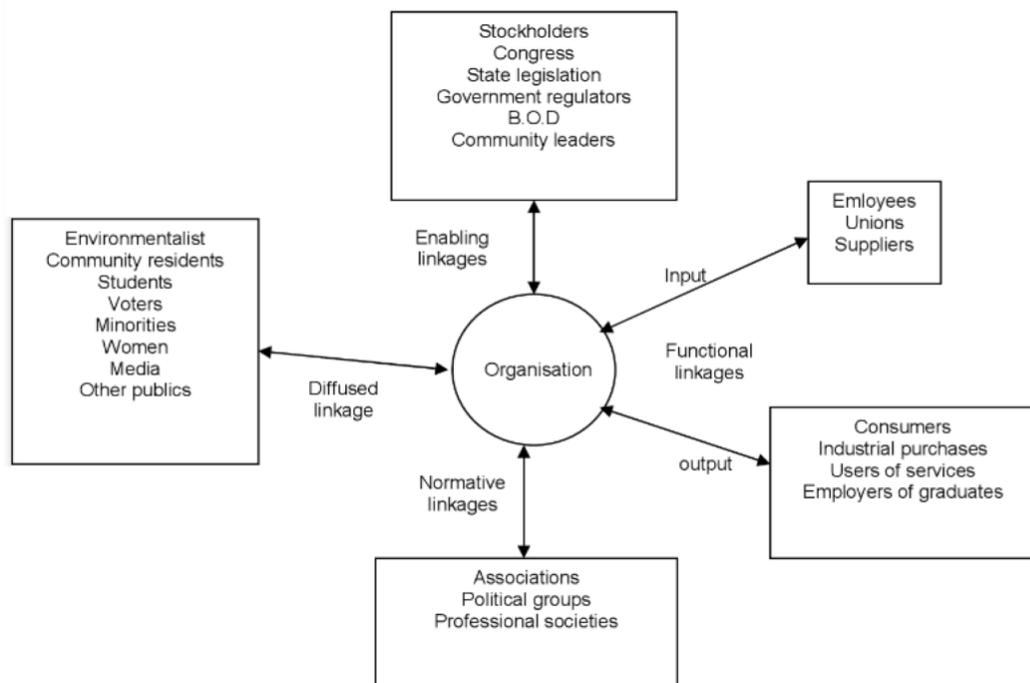


Figure 1. Linkages model of Grunig and Hunt (1984)

Source: Rawlins (2006, p. 4) adapted from Grunig and Hunt (1984 p. 141).

Building and nurturing relationships is one of the basic communication methods in interorganisational management. Therefore, the basic activity in this phase should necessarily focus on activities aimed at establishing interorganisational relations. For example, in an

organisation, pre-crisis preparedness should focus on efforts to define, establish and maintain the nature of relationships, recognising that they are likely to work together even in crisis situations. It is also very important to develop and support trust in interorganisational relationships.

The key determinant of knowledge sharing and the basis of relationships in interorganisational cooperation is trust. As Coleman, Anthony and Morrison (2009 p. 4) have argued, "without some people or institutions that can be trusted to inform us, the task of informing ourselves would become so laborious and unwieldy that public knowledge would be mainly confined to narrow and parochial experience". Trust changes over time according to context and relationship. Its shape can be influenced by the form and frequency of communication, as well as the types of parties involved in interorganisational relationships. Often, more trust is placed in the part of the organisation that one knows best. For example, one unit may not trust another unit in the organisation for certain tasks, such as implementing decisions, but may trust the same unit for decision-making. Frequent and regularly repeated interactions between individuals increase relational trust. Trust between different organisations is seen as a form of social capital, but it is also a prerequisite for crisis communication and knowledge sharing.

Most organisations have set themselves the goal of gaining an advantage by building interorganisational relationships. Therefore, in order to gain an advantage from interorganisational relationships, organisations and their managers need to be constantly engaged in relationship maintenance, and the issue required for relationship maintenance is the building of trust. The role of trust in the context of building and maintaining interorganisational relationships means not only the ability to build trust in situations where it is possible, but also the ability to deal with situations where trust is lacking. Building trust is a long-term process, but it is very effective in building lasting interorganisational relationships. Unequal power relations, as well as manipulation and control within individual organisations to protect their own interests, make it difficult to build trust. To avoid this, some organisations introduce trust management because, as practitioners suggest, trust is the main ingredient for success in interorganisational relationships (Creed and Miles, 1996; Cullen et al., 2000).

According to researchers, success in interorganisational relationships is related to the ability to anticipate the actions and behaviours of other individuals or organisations, which is supported by trust management. Researchers also recognise that cooperation is the main driver in reducing opportunistic behaviour and fear of uncertainty, regardless of the existence or lack

of trust between relationship partners (Sharfman et al., 1991). It is also assumed that "the advantages of sharing resources such as technology, engineering expertise, and quality management outweighed (at least to some extent) the disadvantages stemming from mistrust" (Sharfman et al., 1991, p. 185). Bryson believes that the best theory for building trust is the so-called small wins, where trust is built in small steps through small projects and joint initiatives (Bryson, 1988).

However, interorganisational relationships are not all positive. There is a view in the literature that failure in an interorganisational task with a partner can lead to shifting blame to one of the partners, which in turn leads to the destruction of interorganisational relations (Park et al., 2018). The shifting of blame between organisations takes both private and public forms, in order to demonstrate the understanding of the failure by both the partner and the public. In the 21st century business landscape, organisations in professional relationships share not only the benefits (Brass et al., 2004) but also the burdens (Bruyaka et al., 2018) of cooperation. The more frequent interorganisational collaboration, the greater the synergies between organisations (Dyer and Singh, 1998), but also the greater the risk of failure of joint ventures (Kahn et al., 2013). The benefits of shifting blame to a partner in the event of project failure include preventing potential reputational damage from failure and reducing financial liability. Nevertheless, in such situations, the relationship may break down, resulting in public backlash (Park et al., 2015; Park et al., 2018).

Nevertheless, the consequence of interorganisational relationships is manifested in the sequence of their stages, as different requirements have to be met when establishing ties, others when counting on the extension of the relationship, and still others when there is a need to end them. It should be added that different skills are needed at each stage of the relationship, since the development of the relationship is rarely distorted by tensions between the partners. It is therefore necessary to continuously develop the ability to manage conflict and control the bonds between partners, as well as the reciprocity in adapting to internal changes in the organisation and those resulting from the environment.

The available literature mentions four models showing the cycles of development of interorganisational relations (van de Ven and Poole, 1995):

- 1) the cycle model;
- 2) the learning model;
- 3) the dialectical model;

4) the co-evolutionary.

The cycle model is based on the assumption of the existence of strictly defined stages, as in the case of living organisms. This model is sometimes criticised in the literature because of the inevitability of a sequence that deprives the management of the influence of the stages and plans of cooperation. The separation of the phases also seems ambiguous, although the advantage of this model is the strict definition of the boundaries between the different phases (Table 7). It is worth mentioning that some researchers have used matrimonial similarity: partners may behave differently at the beginning of the relationship, differently during engagement or marriage than in the case of divorce (Kanter, 1994).

Table 7. Variants of distinguishing phases of the life cycle of interorganisational relations

Source	Phases				
Kogut (1988)	Formation		Institutionalization		Conclusion
Jap, Ganesan (2000)	Exploration	Building	Maturity		Decline
Das and Teng (1999)	Partner selection	Structuring	Operating activities	Rating	Disintegration

Source: Koźmiński and Latusek-Jurczak (2014, p. 193).

The learning model is based on the need to shape cooperation through the possibility of gaining experience, observing the partner and systematically assessing the relationship, because even a perfectly matched partner in terms of resources, culture, competences or tasks may prove to be inappropriate as a result of cooperation. This model adds to interorganisational management the need to learn to work together and to assess relationships. These are two essential elements for a relationship (van de Ven and Poole, 1995).

The dialectical model focuses on cases of disagreement or tension and sees imbalance as the cause of change. In addition to the behavioural and cognitive aspect, this model suggests the need to develop conflict management skills (van de Ven and Poole, 1995).

The co-evolutionary model describes the process of change in the environment, which is overlooked or underestimated in other models, and which affects the dynamics of the relationship in order to adapt to the changes in the environment (van de Ven and Poole, 1995).

Conversations about building and sustaining trust with relationship partners enable practitioners to develop innovative and conceptual solutions to address all the challenges of building and managing trust and preventing the destruction of many relationships. Stakeholder theory is helpful in prioritising and establishing organisational decision-making processes, as it helps to seek to understand and reconcile the interests of the participants in the relationship.

1.4. Stakeholder theory – in context of building interorganisational relationships

In 1984 R. E. Freeman, presented the theory of stakeholders, which focused on the assumption that enterprises and their environment (environment) are mutually interpenetrating systems, affecting their functioning and mutually dependent on each other. The concept of stakeholders was defined by him as "any group or individual that can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organisation's objectives" (Freeman, 1984 p. 46). Freeman pointed out that the company has many stakeholders (including shareholders, customers, employees, suppliers, the local community, society, government, the natural environment), each of whom is important and whose needs should be considered. The term and the theory are based on strategic management (Freeman, 1984). Considering stakeholders in the organisation's strategy is an essential element of contemporary strategic management. Information about key stakeholders and their expectations of the organisation is the basis for creating and modifying the mission, vision and strategic goals. R.E. Freeman proposed a strategic management process that takes into account the existence of stakeholders in the organisation's internal and external environment (Freeman, 1994).

In a given approach, the goal is to treat all stakeholders fairly (Fassin, 2012a). Despite its widespread popularity, according to some scholars of stakeholder theory, "stakeholder theory is timely yet adolescent, controversial yet important (...) Yet it is adolescent because empirical validity is yet to be established on several of its key propositions" (Laplume et al., 2008, p. 1153). There are various definitions of stakeholders in the literature, including Freeman and Reed, who state that stakeholders are "any identifiable group or individual on which the organisation is dependent for its continued survival" (Freeman and Reed, 1983, p. 91). Thompson, Wartic and Smith (1991) define stakeholders as groups in relation to the organisation. Clarkson describes stakeholders as "persons or groups that have, or claim, ownership, rights, or interests in a corporation and its activities, past, present, or future" (Clarkson, 1995 p. 106) and proposes, that stakeholders with similar interests can also be

grouped together. Carroll argues that individuals and groups can be considered stakeholders because of their legitimacy, and their claim is focused on gaining power (Carroll, 1993). In their work, Hill and Jones present stakeholders as constituencies with legitimate claims against the organisation (Hill and Jones, 1992).

Some scholars have argued that certain definitions, particularly those relating to a relationship or transaction process that requires a contract, fall within the scope of those concepts that do not have an engagement that can influence or be influenced (Mitchell et al., 1997). In addition, Mitchell et al (1997) note that definitions referring to contracts, relationships or transactions require a mutual exchange, which is lacking in the concept of stakeholders can influence or be influenced, as seen in Freeman's (1984) definition. Jenson explains that stakeholder theory is based on the view that managers should focus on the interests of all stakeholders in the organisation in which they work when making decisions (Jenson, 2001). Following Mainardes and other researchers, it can be concluded that despite the many definitions of the term stakeholder and its widespread use in the media, business or politics, many organisations lack confirmation that they understand the term (Mainardes et al., 2011). The situation is similar in academic circles, where there are a variety of given definitions, but not generally accepted and used one (Benn et al., 2016). Despite the lack of a single definition used by academics, there are some similarities, including definitions which require organisations to take into account the interests, needs and influence of people or groups who are considered to be able to influence the actions and decisions of a particular organisation.

One of the stakeholder approaches to strategic management, called stakeholder relationships management, suggests that organisations seek to influence the decisions of stakeholders through their actions (Fassin, 2012a). Using and implementing the stakeholder concept requires organisations to understand the power of stakeholder influence over the organisation's operations and to use governance to meet their demands (Rowley, 1997). An organisation that implements stakeholder relationships management as part of its strategic management process should treat stakeholders as the highest value. One approach to measuring the success of an organisation is by examining its growth and the extent to which it meets the claims of stakeholders (Frąckiewicz-Wronka, 2010). The more stakeholder expectations and demands are met by the organisation, the higher the level of their satisfaction. Unfortunately, organisations are not able to meet all stakeholder demands and management decisions are usually made taking into account the expectations of the most important stakeholders (Czakon, 2010). Organisations that engage in stakeholder relationships management focus their activities

on trying to satisfy primarily those entities that are important to a given organisation in order to effectively conduct further business activities. Figure 2 shows an example of stakeholders grouped according to their impact on the organisation's success.

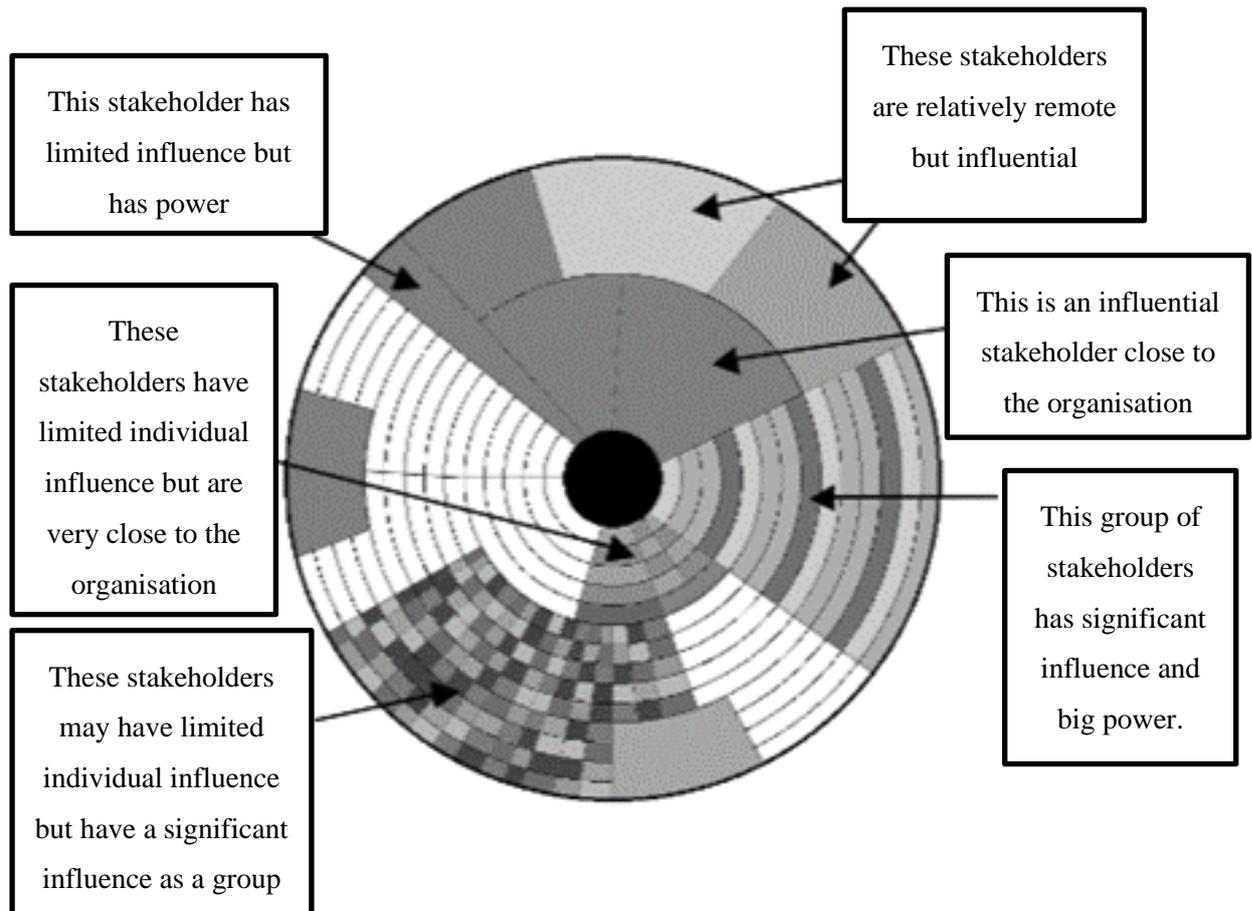


Figure 2. The Stakeholder Circle

Source: own elaboration based on Bourne and Walker (2005, p. 656).

Figure 2 shows that the stakeholder circle shows how divergent stakeholders can be and, consequently, their claims towards the organisation. Meeting the expectations of all stakeholders is impossible in practice, therefore organisations should identify priority stakeholders and focus on meeting their expectations.

Most stakeholder demands and expectations are divergent or contradictory due to conflicts of interest. In the case of conflicting stakeholder expectations, meeting some requirements may have a negative impact on a given organisation (Gołębiowski, 2002). Stakeholders of a given organisation can inform about their more or less important demands, while the organisation distinguishes priority goals and focuses on their fulfilment. The company is therefore faced with the choice of which expectations and which stakeholders to satisfy first. This choice is directly related to the impact of a particular group of stakeholders on the development and survival of the individual. Stakeholder analysis can help to identify and highlight priority stakeholders (Rodriguez Serna et al., 2022). Stakeholder analysis is a

technique that involves a comprehensive evaluation of the organisation and a detailed characterization of its immediate and broader environment (Smith, 2000). stakeholder relationships management is a method classified as qualitative due to its descriptive nature and the possibility of choosing different analysis procedures (see Table 8). However, despite the possibility of choosing the degree of stakeholder analysis, certain specifications remain unchanged, i.e. the hierarchy of stakeholders of a given organisation, taking into account the expectations of stakeholders correlated with the strategy or mission of the organisation. In particular, in the context of formulating the organisation's strategy, the processes of hierarchisation and systematisation of stakeholders are of great importance.

Table 8. Stakeholder analysis procedure

Stages Sources	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
A. Koźmiński and W. Piotrowski, (2006, pp. 153-154)	identification of stakeholders	assessment of importance for the organisation				
K. Obłój (2007, pp. 218-219)	assessing stakeholder power	confirmation of stakeholder impact	determining the importance and urgency of stakeholder requests			
M. Lisiński (2004, pp. 80-88)	identifying the closest partners of the organisation	determining the mutual relations	identifying and evaluating the impact of partners on organisations			
M. Ward (1997, pp. 24-25)	determining the areas of activity of interest groups	identifying separate interest groups	establishing interest groups-organisations	determining the division of roles		
Ch.W.L. Hill and G.R. Jones (1992, pp. 29)	identification of stakeholders	identifying stakeholder claims	determination of claims that can be met	identification of key stakeholders	identifying all strategic challenges	
R. Lynch (2003, p. 432)	identification of stakeholders	defining expectations	establishing the power of particular groups	establishing priorities	negotiations with selected stakeholders	verification of the main goals

Source: own elaboration based on Klimas (2011, pp. 174-175).

The analysis begins by identifying all stakeholders of the company, recognizing that stakeholders may change over the organisation's life cycle (Jawahar and McLaughlin, 2001). It

is worth remembering that every organisation operates in a dynamic environment, so it is worth updating the list of potential and actual stakeholders on a regular basis.

The next step is to prioritise and characterise stakeholders, a process often guided by the organisation's knowledge, past experience or document analysis. In the above stakeholder analysis procedure, stage three involves identifying the urgency and strength of each stakeholder group, while stage four focuses on identifying priorities and key stakeholders. Stages four and five involve negotiating with stakeholders, identifying challenges, and considering modifications to the organisation's objectives.

Organisations have different relationships with stakeholders as part of the dynamic market system. These relationships are classified as shown in Table 9.

Table 9. The organisation's stakeholder classification

<i>Stakeholders</i>	<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Source</i>
1. Internal and External	Location in relation to the organisation	R.E. Freeman (1984)
2. Primary Independent and Secondary Interdependent stakeholders	Resource analysis in the organisation	A. Svendsen (1998)
3. Active spectators, players, arbitrators, crowd	The strength of influence and the degree of interest in the activities of the organisation	G. Johnson and K. Scholes (1999)
4. Substantial, contractual, contextual	The nature of the relationship	M.A.Rodriguez and J.E. Ricart (2002)
5. Dormant, Domineering, Discreet, Indisputable, Dependent, Dangerous, Demanding	Possibility to influence the environment: social legitimacy, power and urgency (criticality)	R. Mitchell (1997)
6. Marginal, opposing, supportive and limited support	Possibility of creating threats and cooperation	M.J. Polonsky and D. Scott (2005)
7. Primary and secondary	The direct or indirect impact of stakeholders on the organisation's value creation	K. Pajunen (2002)
8. Insiders and outsiders' stakeholders	Division according to the location of stakeholders	L. Robins (2009)

Source: own elaboration based on Klimas (2011, pp. 176-177).

To pursue its strategy, the company can focus on meeting the expectations of only those stakeholders that are important to the company. For many organisations, matching specific individuals to stakeholder groups poses many problems and difficulties. Companies deciding on such a tactic can use:

1. T. Saaty's matrix of relative importance or R. Lynch's list of questions or stakeholder map, described in more detail below (Klimas, 2011): T. Saaty's matrix - consists of an attempt to create a matrix that subordinates stakeholders according to their interdependencies. Relationships are rated, with the most important stakeholders receiving the highest rating from the company's perspective (Lynch, 2003);
2. List of questions - a qualitative and subjective approach, consisting in obtaining detailed answers to the issues of contacts with stakeholders in the context of the company's operations (Koźmiński and Piotrowski, 2006);
3. Stakeholder map - showing the organisation's relationship with stakeholders on the stakeholder map. The company is in the centre, and the thickness indicates the strength of the pressure exerted by a given stakeholder group, while the length of the arrows between the organisation and the stakeholder indicates its further importance (Klimas, 2011).

The above stakeholder classifications and characteristics are not very precise as they are mostly based on subjective assessment and assignment to a particular stakeholder group. The next section describes more detailed methods that allow the whole process to be objectified (Klimas, 2011).

In some approaches, a subjective hierarchy of stakeholders may not always lead to reliable results. Nor is it always justified to place the company at the centre of the entire stakeholder environment. For this reason, researchers also choose to use social network analysis (SNA). Social network analysis can also be used in stakeholder mapping (Klimas, 2011).

Social network analysis can also be used in stakeholder mapping. A social network is a combination of individuals, institutions and organisations, called nodes, that are connected by a set of relationships (Downes, 2005). Social network analysis is a tool that allows in-depth analysis and mapping based on quantitative measures of relationships between network elements, i.e. stakeholders. This tool is derived from statistics and the mathematical theory of graphs, matrix algebra (Scott, 2004). Network analysis is widely used mainly in two areas: the analysis of relationships between employees of a given organisation (showing the internal structure of the organisation), and the analysis of the relational environment of the organisation (showing its connections with other organisations); research on a larger scale becomes the analysis of clusters or entire sectors (Marschlich and Ingenhoff, 2021). The data of interpretation are paradigms in management sciences, which are also noticed in Poland, both in the context of mapping the internal environment of the organisation's functioning, i.e. intra-

organisational research (Batorski and Zdziarski, 2009), as well as the relationship between the organisation and external entities, i.e. interorganisational research (Batorski, 2008; Batorski and Zdziarski, 2009; Czakon, 2012a).

It is often referred to as Organisational Network Analysis (ONA), especially when SNA is used in intra- and interorganisational analyses (Stępka and Subda, 2009). In the literature on the subject, there is a view that the stakeholder environment is nothing more than a set of contracts and links between contracts, and in addition, such a network surrounds each organisation (Rowley, 1997).

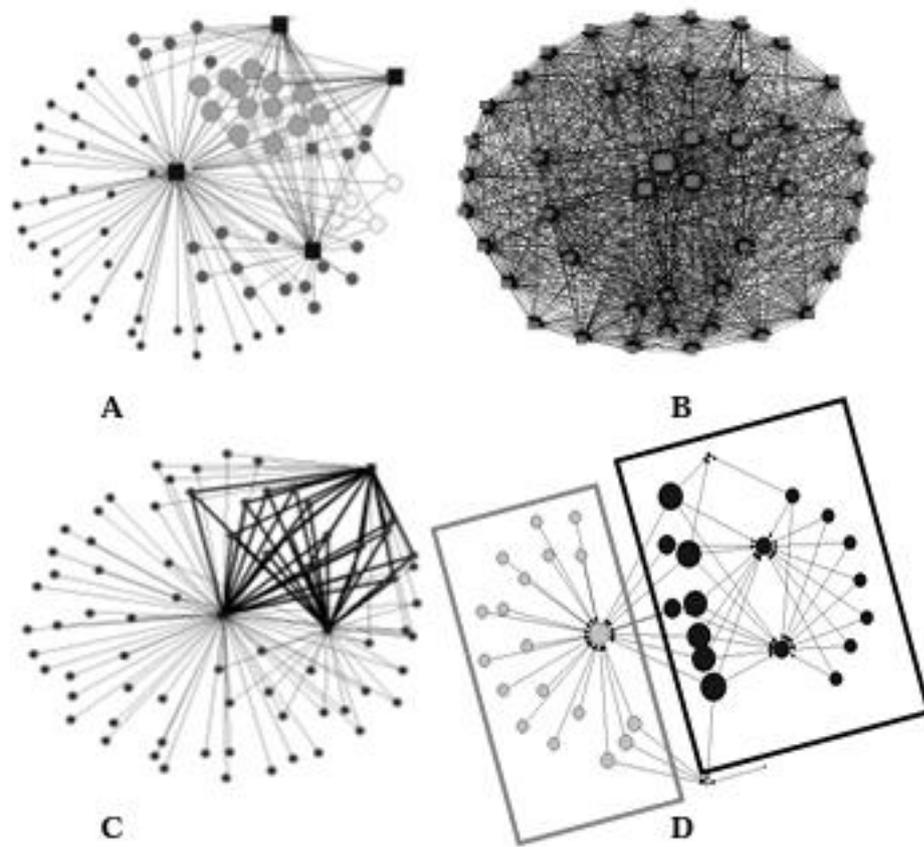


Figure 3. The stakeholder maps

Source: P. Klimas (2011 p. 178).

Figure 3 shows models of networks between stakeholders and the organisation. In Figures A and C, potential leaders are represented by a square. Figure B also shows the relationships that exist between the different stakeholders and a D drawing of belonging to a particular sub-network. By using this tool to study the organisation's stakeholders, it is possible

to answer the question of the strength of interaction of a given stakeholder, to obtain more information about the stakeholders and to calculate network parameters. Using network analysis in stakeholder research also makes it possible to examine the relationships that exist between stakeholders and the organisation, i.e. cooperation or information flow (Batorski, 2009).

Both the goals and the motivations of interorganisational cooperation have been based primarily on achieving synergy effects, on gaining access to widely understood resources with the possibility of their exchange, i.e. basically on improving the efficiency and the results of a given organisation as a result of cooperation. However, it can also turn out that the result of interorganisational cooperation is the loss of opportunities or the destruction of value. Such situations may arise for organisations not involved in the cooperation, in the case of a deliberate agreement between the actors, or for organisations involved in the cooperation, in the case of unfavourable cooperation. The negative effects of interorganisational cooperation and cooperation between different partners, not only in terms of experience or size, but also belonging to fundamentally different environments, are only an emerging area of research. An important area of research is undoubtedly both bilateral relationships, e.g. in strategic alliances, and multilateral relationships (more than two partners in a relationship). As the literature on the subject points out, multilateral relations are qualitatively different from bilateral agreements because of the greater challenge of deciding on common goals, interests, ways of achieving them, methods of monitoring and coordination, or even the benefits to be gained from cooperation. It is also worth exploring the evolution of interorganisational relations over time and identifying the factors that allow both the establishment of cooperation and its maintenance or interruption.

The methodological approach to interorganisational studies is the main challenge for researchers in this field. The tools and methodologies being developed around social network analysis are particularly promising. The organisation can analyse relationships on a macro and micro level, only within the organisation, or only all relationships with stakeholders, both external and internal. In addition, it is possible to carry out analyses only on a selected group of stakeholders, without considering them all, thanks to the wide use of mathematical analysis tools that allow a thorough examination of a given network (Kujala et al., 2022).

In the management literature, there are many concepts related to the theory of stakeholders and their management, but despite this, there are a number of difficulties in identifying stakeholders by an organisation and defining their boundaries (Fassin, 2012b).

Stakeholder research has often been conducted only at an organisational or theoretical level, often without the involvement of the actual stakeholders of the organisations concerned (Hillenbrand et al., 2013).

Information about key stakeholders and their expectations towards the organisation is the basis for creating and modifying the mission, vision, and strategic goals. R. E. Freeman (1984) proposed a strategic management process that considers the existence of stakeholders in the internal and external environment of the organisation.

1.5. Types of enterprise stakeholders in interorganisational relations

Organisations enter into relationships and interactions with other organisations, individuals and groups that populate and make up the organisational environment. Managing stakeholders is essentially stakeholder relationships management because an organisation manages relationships, not actual groups of stakeholders (Friedman and Miles, 2006). Stakeholder relationships management refers to managing relationships with various groups and individuals who have an interest in the organisation (Kosiń, 2019). This stakeholder relationships management is based on stakeholder engagement and communication. The objective of stakeholder engagement is to gather stakeholder opinions on both the organisation and its projects. (Friedman and Miles, 2006). Interaction with stakeholders is an aspect linked to most national documents, especially political ones, which require organisation, especially in public services, necessary to interact with citizens. They influence the actions and decisions of the organisation through the understanding of the importance by decision makers and the communication with the people concerned. The ability to communicate with stakeholders and develop an engagement strategy becomes extremely important. To find out with whom and why the organisation engages, it is sufficient to carry out a stakeholder analysis and strategically set priorities (Brugha and Varvasovszky, 2000).

To create effective engagement in the organisation, it is also necessary to understand the needs, expectations and requirements of the stakeholders. Good communication is the basis for developing relationships between organisations and stakeholders. Communication based on dialogue on the part of both parties, positive behaviour, understanding is the most important element of cooperation (Osobajo et al., 2023). Trust in knowledge sharing and open communication are the basis and conditions for active participation and commitment in the relationship. Good engagement between stakeholders and the organisation not only produces

better results but is also important for reputation. Equal and symmetrical communication is based on trust, openness and credibility. Listening to stakeholders and allowing them to express their objections and concerns through feedback is also an important part of the interaction (Kacperska and Łukasiewicz, 2020).

Social media can help manage stakeholder relationships. However, social media also presents both opportunities and threats. Popular social media platforms such as Twitter (now X), Facebook or YouTube allow for direct contact with stakeholders, new opportunities to connect with them and interaction with interested stakeholders on many levels (Nguyen et al., 2023). Social media can also be helpful when an organisation is aware of a pre-crisis situation (Fischer-Preßler et al., 2023). The aim is to prevent crises by proactively managing issues or risks through social media or building good relationships with stakeholders. Social media not only enable the exchange of messages, but also provide a tool for interactive communication, with the organisation and stakeholders taking on interchangeable roles as recipients and creators of content. Social media is also an essential tool for gathering stakeholder opinions. The interactivity between organisations and stakeholders through social media provides a quick source of real-time feedback. Such contact not only allows information to be shared, but also allows stakeholders to gain support and useful information on the issues under discussion. As well as gaining the support of the largest stakeholders, it is important to have a safeguard in place if something goes wrong for the organisation (Walsh et al., 2022). Communicating with stakeholders early and as often as possible will create lasting lines of communication that can be relied upon in times of crisis. Social media can and should be used to build and maintain relationships with different stakeholder groups. Therefore, maintaining qualitative relationships with stakeholders should be a priority, as such relationships, according to researchers, are an important part of effective crisis management (Park and Reber, 2011). In this way, authentic stakeholder relationships serve as a buffer in boom times and in times of crisis.

Stakeholders can be distinguished in different ways. Mitchell, Agle. and Wood (1997) divide stakeholders into potential and actual, distinguishing between individuals, groups, institutions, organisations, neighbourhoods, the environment and society (Mitchell et al., 1997). Rodriguez, Ricart and Sanchez (2002) propose a classification of stakeholders according to their value to a given organisation. As a result of this division, three groups of stakeholders are distinguished:

- 1) sub-constituting stakeholders – the company cannot function without them:

- a) owners,
- b) employees.

2) contractual stakeholders – related to the company on the basis of a formal or informal agreement. These include clients:

- a) suppliers,
- b) competitors,
- c) financial institutions.

3) contextual stakeholders – play a fundamental role in achieving the organisation's reputation and social recognition for its activities. It is:

- a) local, regional and national government,
- b) media (Rodriguez et al., 2002).

The logic behind stakeholder theory is based on the assumption that organisations have relationships with different stakeholders because of the pervasive and unavoidable relationship between the organisation and its environment. For example, organisations are managed by top managers and top managers make strategic decisions that affect stakeholders (Hult et al., 2011). According to Mitchell et al. (1997), although the concept of stakeholders is a descriptive theory, there is limited agreement with Freeman's (1984) findings, which focus on defining who or what really matters. The thought indicated above, Mitchell et al. (1997) complements it by defining who (or what) a company's stakeholders are and who or what managers should look out for when defining stakeholders.

Stakeholder theory is based on the fact that organisations establish relationships with stakeholders in order to meet their needs and expectations in a sequential manner. As a result, numerous typologies have been created to allow appropriate urgency ratings to be assigned to a given stakeholder; data weights and ratings are not only different in each organisation, but are also constantly changing.

Although several stakeholder classifications have been mentioned in the previous subsection, this subsection will present those that I believe deserve a more detailed description and development. more detailed description and development. One of the typologies listed below will be helpful in solving the scientific problem posed in a given dissertation.

An important and, at the same time, one of the first differentiations of stakeholders is the division found in Freeman's work (see Figure 4), which divides stakeholders into 3 groups:

- stakeholders who affect the organisation and remain beyond its influence,
- stakeholders who both influence and be influenced by the organisation,
- stakeholders who cannot influence the organisation but are influenced by it.

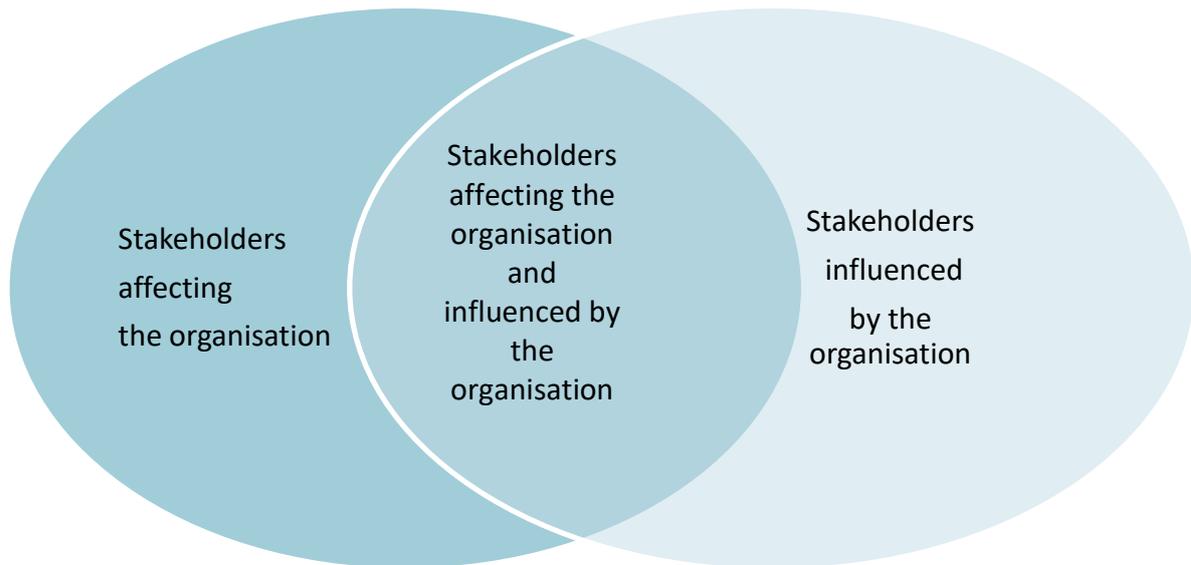


Figure 4. The typology of stakeholders according to R.E. Freeman

Source: Freeman (2010 p. 46).

Figure 4 shows one of the fundamental divisions used in stakeholder theory. It is worth noting that such a distinction is only relevant in the short term, as it would be difficult to make in the long term due to the degree of complexity of the organisation and its environment. This is due to the simple principle that every system is made up of an infinite number of other systems, so that everything is interconnected and it is therefore impossible to define one element as not affecting the organisation in the long term.

The second division, which Freeman also uses explicitly, is between external and internal stakeholders. However, the above dichotomy has irrelevant qualities for determining materiality in relation to a particular stakeholder.

Another very popular stakeholder mapping model is that of Brooks and Weatherston (1997). This model uses two criteria (power and interest) to identify stakeholder clusters, as shown in the diagram below (see Figure 5).

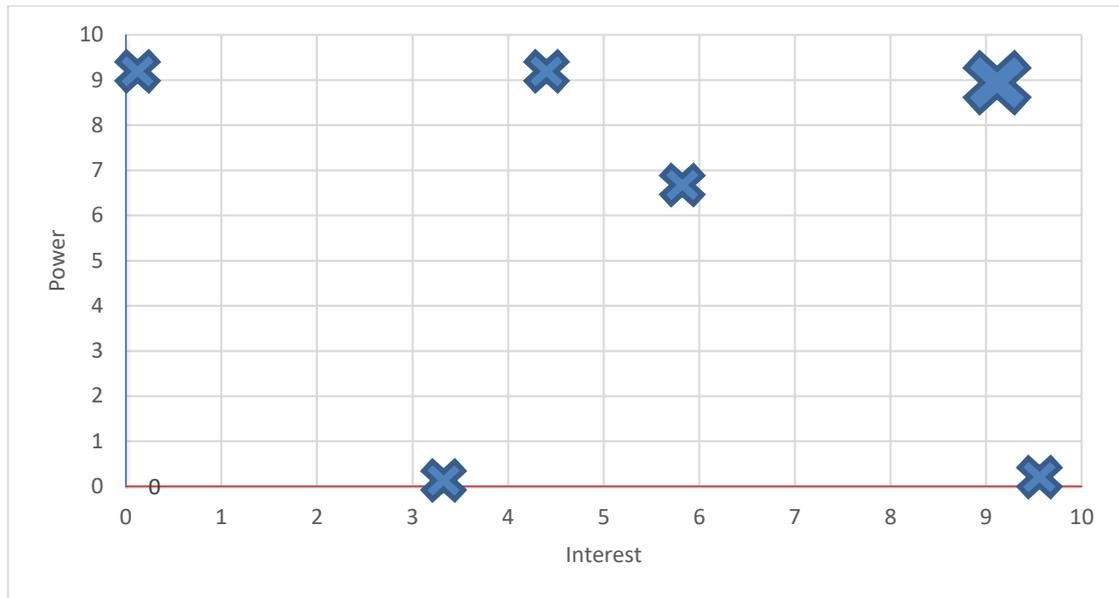


Figure 5. Stakeholder mapping model

Source: Brooks and Weatherston (1997 p. 11).

Figure 5 shows graphically which stakeholders have the most power and influence. A given tool is very important in the process of strategic management and, most importantly, a given analysis allows managers to assess both the relative power and influence of each of the organisation's stakeholders by marking them with a cross on a given graph.

Figure 6 shows the model proposed by the Rodriguez, Ricart and Sanchez (2002). It is a model of a dynamic company in which, as the authors point out, sub-stakeholders are those who are needed for the existence of the company. Contractual stakeholders, as the name suggests, have some kind of formal agreement with the company. Contextual stakeholders play an essential role in the company's credibility and ultimately the acceptance of its actions (Rodriguez et al., 2002).

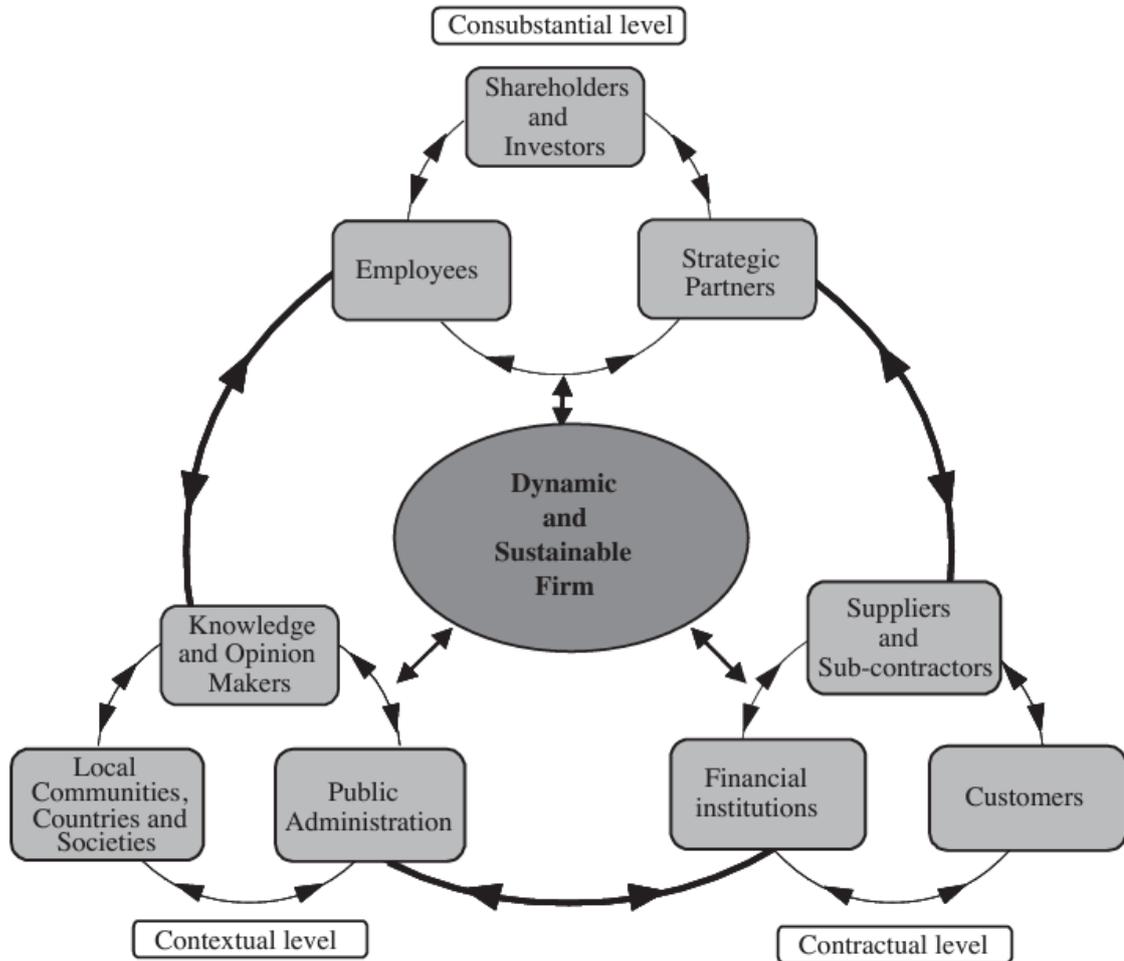


Figure 6. The Dynamic and Sustainable Firm and its Stakeholders

Source: Rodriguez, Ricart and Sanchez (2002 p. 141).

In order to fully understand the illustration, it is necessary to know the full definition formulated by the researchers, which defines substantive stakeholders as entities that have a fundamental influence on the existence of the company. Contractual stakeholders are to be understood as entities that have a contractual relationship with the company, while contextual stakeholders influence the credibility of the company and the acceptance of its actions - business licence (Rodriguez et al., 2002).

These classifications may leave many doubts, as they lack permanent reference points. For example, employees are included in the sub-constituency group and customers are not considered key, only strategic partners. Despite its popularity, this typology is of little use in business management. This is mainly due to the lack of a fixed reference point for each

organisation and the confusion of the criteria of salience (Khurram and Petit, 2017; Kosch, 2017).

Another model for determining the salience of the relationship with a particular stakeholder is Murray-Webster and Simon's cube model (see Figure 7). This model distinguishes three axes: power (ability to influence), interest (defining their involvement or lack thereof), attitude (whether they will support or block the activities of the organisation).

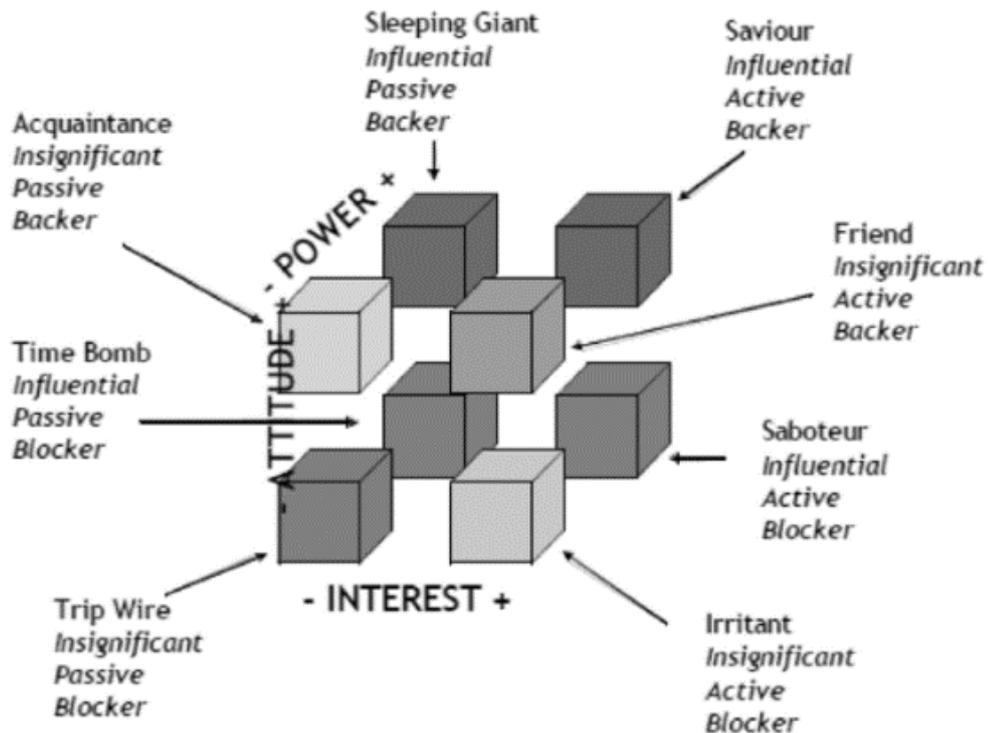


Figure 7. Murray-Webster and Simon - cube model

Source: Murray-Webster and Simon (2006 pp. 1-5).

The typology forms eight groups (Murray-Webster and Simon, 2006):

1. saviours, stakeholders with enormous power, interested and supporting - it's worth having them on the organisation's side.
2. friends, stakeholders with little power, but interested and with a positive attitude - it's worth having them on the organisation's side.
3. saboteurs, influential and interested in the failure of the enterprise, it is worth neutralizing them.
4. irritants, have no influence, only negative attitude and interest - best to try to change their attitude.

5. sleeping giants, they have a lot of power and are positive, but not interested; try to involve them.
6. acquaintances, lack of power and no interest, although they have a positive attitude - it is worth informing them about the organisation's plans.
7. ticking bombs, influential and negative and uninterested - it's worth reassuring them.
8. tripwires, no power, no interest, but having a negative attitude - better watch out for them.

This classification, by introducing an attitude criterion, makes it possible to classify all stakeholders as blockers or backers. Similar approaches are often used by other authors (e.g. Banerjee and Bonnefous, 2011). However, this typology does not seem appropriate in the context of this work, as it is difficult to find blockers in interorganisational relationships, as they would prevent the relationship from being established.

Similar classifications, i.e. supporters and blockers, are also used by other authors and are very valuable from a strategic management point of view. The next and most valuable from the point of view of this work is the classification of stakeholders according to Mitchell, Agle and Wood (1997), see Figure 8. The Stakeholder Salience Model is based on three criteria: power (ability to force others to act), legitimacy (justification for actions accepted in the community) and urgency (how intense and time-consuming the demands are) of actions in the company (Mitchell et al., 1997).

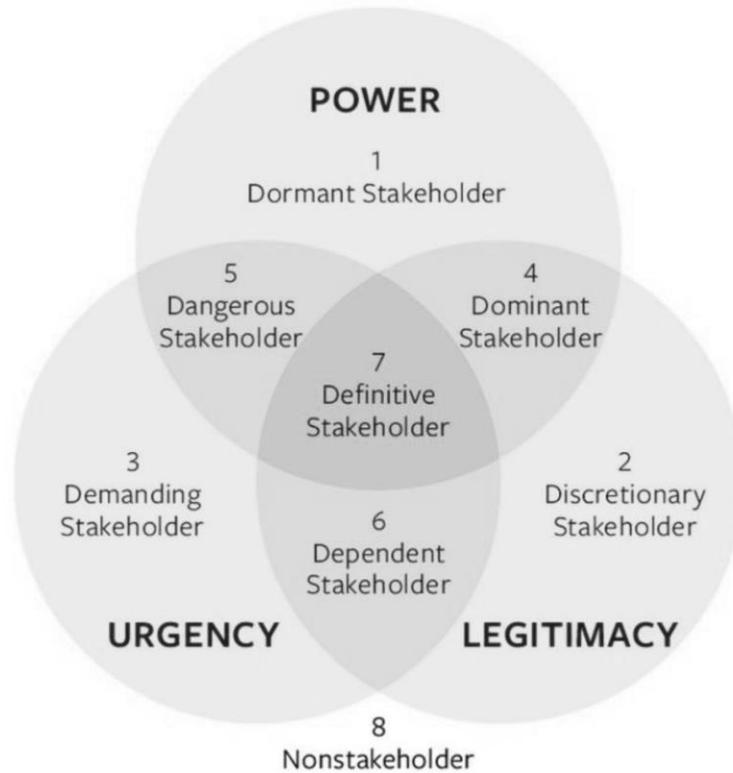


Figure 8. The Stakeholder Salience model

Source: Mitchell, Agle and Wood (1997, p. 874).

These are the stakeholders, according to Figure 8 (Kosch, 2017; Mitchell et al., 1997):

1. Dormant stakeholders capable of influencing the enterprise, but without legitimacy or urgency, they do not realize their opportunities
2. Discretionary stakeholders, having neither urgent claims nor power, have some legitimacy; active policy towards these stakeholders depends on management discretion
3. Demanding stakeholders, lacking power and legitimacy, harmless to the organisation but irritating (if noticed) to management
4. Dominant stakeholders- due to power and legitimacy, even if they decide not to make any move, the managers will pay a lot of attention to their (sometimes even only potential) expectations
5. Dangerous stakeholders, having justification for their urgent claims, but not having the strength to enforce them - the implementation of claims requires assistance from the managing authorities or other stakeholders

6. Dependent stakeholders, who have power and urgent claims, but no legal justification for their demands, will try to coerce for the fulfilment of their whims

7. Definitive stakeholders - having legitimacy and power, satisfying their urgent claims becomes a legitimate priority for managers, deciding the course of action in the company.

8. Non stakeholder or potential stakeholder – having no attribute, neither power nor urgency nor legitimacy.

This approach is a convincing tool for multidimensional and systematic assessment of the importance of the organisation's stakeholders, which allows effective management of relations with them (Kosch, 2017; Mitchell et al., 1997).

The basic feature of the Stakeholder Salience model is the assumption that it is dynamic. This is due to three attributes: firstly, urgency, power and legitimacy are variable; secondly, the attributes are subjective; thirdly, the stakeholder is not always aware of having a given attribute or does not always want to act on the basis of it. According to the creators of the model, the three variables present in the model are variables, which means that they can change all the time. For example, dependent stakeholders can suddenly become ultimate stakeholders if they have similar expectations to the dominant stakeholder. Furthermore, the dominant stakeholder can also become the ultimate stakeholder. This is the case when its legitimate interest or expectation in the organisation becomes urgent. Mitchell, Agle and Wood (1997) suggest that a representative of a regulatory authority may become an ultimate stakeholder in the event of a complaint or inspection. All of the above typologies seem to be important in the context of this work, but the first two may be too imprecise, while the sixth and seventh concepts provide a powerful tool in the form of a systematic and multidimensional assessment of the significance of stakeholders, which allows for effective management of relations with them.

In recent decades, interorganisational relationships and networks have appeared in the research of both practitioners and theorists in return for their participation in various forms of structures. Reputational risk has recently been identified as the most significant threat and challenge to modern business. Reputation, understood as the opinion of various stakeholder groups about a particular company and its activities, is formed on the basis of the extent to which their expectations are met by the company. Loss of reputation, understood in this way, results in numerous losses, both measurable and less measurable, which can be time consuming and costly to repair. It follows that a given reputational risk is defined as the difference between

stakeholders' expectations and the actual level of fulfilment of those expectations. Risk management in this sense involves four fundamental stages:

1. risk identification,
2. risk measurement and assessment,
3. risk management,
4. supervision and risk control.

The implementation of all the above stages requires the prioritisation of stakeholders. The purpose of this is to identify the risk of failing to meet the expectations of the priority stakeholder. In a given stakeholder prioritisation process, sampling or stakeholder mapping is very common. Stakeholder mapping is the most commonly used method in project management to prioritise stakeholders and determine a specific course of action in relation to specific groups. In stakeholder mapping, two-dimensional maps are created, so only two criteria are taken into account when evaluating stakeholders. The second method, the sampling method, allows the use of many criteria that can be further hierarchised by assigning weights to them. These stakeholder classification criteria are considered universal, although it is not possible to identify universal or key stakeholder groups for every organisation. Each organisation has to define its own priorities or conditions of operation, taking into account its specificities, and determine the priorities of its stakeholders. Therefore, effective reputational risk management requires constant monitoring and observation of the objectives and expectations of the company's stakeholders, which are constantly changing due to the dynamic environment. This leads to a constant need to review the current hierarchy.

As the organisation remains in the circle of interest of different people and groups, its activities are primarily assessed through the prism of the values it creates for individual stakeholders. Although it is more beneficial for an organisation to consider the expectations of a wide range of stakeholders, in practice this is not always possible. Rybak emphasises that it would be utopian to believe that the expectations of each stakeholder can be met simultaneously without prejudice to others, especially as conflicts arise between different stakeholders (Rybak, 2004). As Mesjasz (2000) points out, these conflicts are caused not only by conflicting interests, but also by the asymmetry of available information. Since business organisations are coalitions of different interests (Mithani and O'Brien, 2021), because there are groups and individuals whose interests are related to its functioning, the work will also include stakeholder theory,

which analyses the nature of the relationship between the company and its stakeholders from the point of view of the benefits of these relationships.

1.6. Summary

In this chapter I have attempted to answer the following additional research question (SRQ1): What is the specificity of the approach to stakeholder relationships management in interorganisational relations? The supporting scientific objective (SRO1) was to identify the advantages of stakeholder relationships management in interorganisational relations. The research method used in this chapter was a narrative literature review.

The specificity of the approach to stakeholder relationships management in interorganisational relations is as follows. Relationships are often exposed to situations that affect the nature of the relationship, sometimes even tending towards negative relationships, and sometimes from negative to positive. Therefore, every organisation should focus on continually establishing, maintaining, nurturing and, where necessary, repairing its relationships with stakeholder groups. The processes of establishing and maintaining interorganisational relationships with stakeholders, mutual communication as well as various activities can be used by the organisation in its strategy and the main goal should be to obtain the desired knowledge as well as perceptions and, in addition, attitudes in relationships.

Organisations operating in today's world are obliged to formulate strategic objectives that take into account the expectations and interests of key stakeholders. Due to the existing contradictions in the context of expectations or interests of individual stakeholders, it is extremely important to prioritise them appropriately. In the literature, researchers can find many tools that can help to establish the so-called stakeholder ranking, i.e. to prioritise stakeholders according to their importance and influence in a reliable and realistic way, which can contribute to better corporate management. Stakeholders have extraordinary power to influence the company, which is why the next section of the text is devoted to this issue. Recognising the above, the scientific supporting objective set in this chapter has been achieved.

In light of the findings in this chapter, it should be recognised that the specificity of the approach to stakeholder relationships management in interorganisational relations has much to offer in times of organisation's prosperity, as well as during crises. Good stakeholder relationships are a valuable asset for any organisation.

Chapter 2

POWER AS THE FACTOR OF INTERORGANISATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

2.1. Introduction

The concept of power plays an important role in interorganisational relationships (see Cowan et al., 2015; Johnsen et al., 2020; Meehan and Wright, 2012). Due to the fact that interorganisational relationships are deeply embedded in broad social structures that are very difficult to delineate, the literature on power in such interorganisational structures is therefore, because of these connections, very deeply embedded in theories of power in society as a whole (Czernek-Marszałek, 2020; Hagedoorn and Frankort, 2008). This chapter will present the meaning of power, its development and evolution in the literature on interorganisational relations, while showing how this meaning relates to the broader discourse on management. It also presents power from the social, structural and behavioural perspectives of individuals and discusses the rationale for managing power asymmetry in interorganisational relations.

The aim of this chapter is to answer the second additional research question (SRQ2) posed in this study: What factors determine the power asymmetry in interorganisational relations? The answer to this question will help to identify the power asymmetry factors in interorganisational relations. An integrative review will be used as the research method in this chapter.

2.2. Power as socially constructed phenomenon

It was previously assumed that relationships between organisations were based on the principles of partner equality and total lack of subordination (Piotrowski, 1979). In practice, however, there is ample evidence that there are also a number of phenomena in relationships which are simply the antinomy of the principle of equality and non-subordination. The sources of this power should be sought primarily in the unbalanced nature of the market, the advanced processes of production concentration and the phenomena of market monopolisation that

inevitably accompany these processes, creating organisational structures and dominant positions (Pieniążek, 1980).

Power is generally considered to be one of the most important social phenomena. Russell (1940) explicitly states that it is a fundamental concept in the social sciences in the same sense as energy is in physics (Russell, 1940). It is universal and supra-formative: it occurs in every society and in all areas of social life; it is of particular interest to the social sciences, it is an interdisciplinary research problem on which the interests of sociology, management, political economy, philosophy, as well as political and legal sciences are focused. The specialisation of science in the 19th and 20th centuries led to this development (Sułkowski, 2010).

There are six most common definitions of power, namely (Trojanek, 1986):

- 1) behavioural (power is a specific type of behaviour involving the ability to modify the behaviour of others);
- 2) instrumental (power consists in the use of specific means, especially violence);
- 3) teleological (power is the fulfilment of certain goals, the production of certain effects);
- 4) structural (power is a certain relationship between the rulers and the ruled);
- 5) power as influence (power is identified with influencing others) (Szreniawski, 1981);
- 6) power as a solution to a conflict situation – as an opportunity to make decisions regulating the distribution of goods in conflict situations.

Representatives of the behavioural type of defining power are, for example, the views of R. H. Tawney and H. A. Simon. The former defines power as the ability of an individual or group to change the behaviour of other individuals or groups in a desired way (Tawney, 1931). A. Simon says that instead of indicating that A has power over B, it can be said that A's behaviour causes (determines) the behaviour of B (Simon, 1957).

Representatives of teleological definitions include B. Russell, who defines power as the ability to generate effects in accordance with one's intention (Russell, 1940), and Persons, who points out that power manifests itself through an individual's ability to achieve set goals within a system (Persons, 1954). The definitions of power by Lasswell and Kaplan are instrumental, as in their definition of power, they emphasise its instrumental nature by pointing out that power is a specific influence characterised by influencing the behaviour of others through the potential or actual threat of severe sanctions if the intended model is not followed (Lasswell and Kaplan,

1950). The aforementioned types of definitions of power are also referred to by the views of sociologists and political scientists, Crozier and Friedberg, who emphasise that the phenomenon of power always involves the ability of a particular individual or groups to influence other individuals, regardless of the type of this power (i.e. source, legitimacy, goals and methods) (Crozier and Fiedberg, 1982).

M. Weber's definition of power indicates that it is the chance for an individual or a group of individuals to act in accordance with their interests when acting together, even in the event of resistance or opposition from other participants (Weber, 1968). Galbraith and Bartel, on the other hand, defines power as the ability of an individual or group to impose its own goals on others, and defines power as the ability to achieve one's own goals and influence the functioning of others (Galbraith and Bartel, 1983). J.K. Galbraith's definition relates directly to M. Weber's definition of power, which as the basis for most definitions of power (Balduš, 1975). According to the classical definition of power by M. Weber, it is the ability to achieve one's goals in a social relationship, even in the face of opposition, regardless of the basis of this ability (Weber, 1968).

Most definitions of power derive from Weber's conception of power, according to which it represents an actor's ability to pursue his or her interest within a social relationship despite opposition (Weber, 1947). Pfeffer (1972) rephrases Dahl's (1957) definition of power as a relationship between two actors A and B in which actor A can induce actor B to perform an action that actor B would not otherwise perform (Pfeffer, 1981). The organisations that wield this power stand above those who are subject to them and subordinate them, trying to make them obey (Łustacz, 1984). The authoritarian nature of power causes serious disparities between duties and powers, because on the one hand, significant rights resulting from the fact that the subject of power operates on the basis of special rights correspond to duties (privileges), and on the other hand, those who are subject to it have an increase in duties and an underdevelopment of claims (obedience). There are dominant entities and dominated entities. According to M. Crozier and E. Freidberg, the inequality of power relations consists in the fact that the exchange that takes place between the parties involved is more beneficial for one of them, and the difference in benefits reflects the different situation in which each party finds itself in relation to the other. For these reasons, therefore, the power in question can be defined as having a certain instrumental value, a kind of good, enabling the violation of just relations of exchange (Crozier and Freidberg, 1982).

Power in the social sciences is perceived as an area strongly associated with the concepts of knowledge and truth, and the earliest works even say that power in society in general is only a subjective phenomenon, not an objective one. Most current definitions derive in the literature on power in interorganisational relations and structures are deeply rooted in theories about power in society in general, which would seem to be highly appropriate as interorganisational relations are embedded within wider social structures, and the demarcation between these two is always problematic (Czernek-Marszałek, 2020; Hagedoorn and Frankort, 2008).

In the literature, power is presented as something more than the imposition of one person's actions on another; it is presented primarily as a phenomenon of a multifaceted nature. France and Raven examined power in several dimensions: reward, coercive, legitimate, referent, expert and informational, taking into account the possibility of influencing the other party. According to French and Raven (1959), power is a change in the beliefs or behaviour of one party as a result of the actions of the other party. The original division was modified again in 1992 when additional variants of the basis of power were added, including negative and positive forms of expertise, personal and impersonal forms of reward and coercion, and the addition of legitimate power based on both norms and contracts (Raven, 1992). Research on interorganisational relations, taking into account the work of French and Raven (1959), not only divided the sources of power into two groups, namely coercive and non-coercive, including expert, referential, legitimate and rewarding power (Cowan et al., 2015), but also, the source of power has also been divided into non-mediated and mediated (Nyaga et al., 2013). Other concepts of power and their further development are briefly presented in Table 10.

Table 10. Review of the definitions of power discussed in the literature

	TYPE OF POWER SOURCES	DEFINITION
Mediated power sources	Coercive	Coercive power is the ability of one firm to influence another firm to punish another firm in order to influence the behaviour of another firm. In the literature, coercive measures are considered to be: the threat of withdrawing a promise, withholding a reward or assistance, or imposing financial penalties (Molm, 1997; Yeung et al., 2009; Siemieniko and Mitreġa, 2019).
		Impersonal coercion is a situation in which an actor is convinced of the possibility of the actual imposition of punishment or mental threats by another actor. Personal coercion is the imposition of punishment or threat of rejection of one actor by another.
	Legitimate	Legitimate authority is the power of one party over the other, which consists in the imposition of thinking in a certain way or the imposition of a certain action. Legitimate power is associated with both informal and formal power. Legitimate

		power is based on cultural values, i.e. on the norms of social responsibility for oneself or the norm of reciprocity or supporting the other party by helping, or in the case of formal power it is based on a written contract signed by the parties (French, 1959).
	Reward	Reward power is based on the use of a reward to persuade or influence the other party's decision or behaviour. There are personal and impersonal rewards. Personal reward is a promise to the other party to start a future relationship and the relationship is a reward. Impersonal rewards consist of the promise of some benefit from another actor, which is given in the form of a promise. This group of rewards includes social recognition or money (Raven, 1992).
Non-mediated power sources	Expert	Non-mediated sources of power Expert power can be both negative and positive and is characterised by one actor having experience or knowledge that the other actor does not have (Palmatier et al., 2006). Positive expert power consists of completely trusting the other party and following their instructions, while negative power is based on acting contrary to what the expert recommends. This behaviour is caused by the feeling that the expert is suggesting actions that are for his or her own benefit (Raven, 1992).
	Referent	Referential power arises when the actions of one firm and the way it conducts business are admired by another firm that identifies with its values (Nyagi et al., 2013). A particular form of power results from and is associated with the desire to belong to groups of that organisation, due to the values of a particular company and the desire to aspire and achieve the same (Siemieniako and Mitreęa, 2019).
	Informational	This form of power is based on an unequal distribution of valuable relationships between the parties. Some information is hidden by one party because it is very valuable and only partial information is given to the other party (Raven, 1965). This type of information transfer makes it possible to control the actions of the other party. Some researchers argue that in a business context this type of power can be seen as a variant of expert power, as argued by Maloni and Benton the type of power refers to one company's possession of information or knowledge that other companies value (Maloni and Benton, 2000).

Source: Siemieniako, Mitreęa, Makkonen and Pfajfar (2022 p. 5).

Foucault (1977) posits that within large social structures, power is omnipresent, dispersed among individuals rather than being attributed to one or many people. This distribution is evident in political discourse. In this context, power and truth are interchangeable, both denoting what is socially acceptable at a particular time. Additionally, this perspective suggests that both physical and non-physical entities lack static meanings, with their interpretations stemming from the related social practices. Consequently, the power dynamics inherent in discourse shape verbal and behavioural expressions (Foucault, 1977). The literature on power demonstrates an increasing interest in the concept (e.g. Makkonen et al., 2023). However, the numerous definitions can lead to differing perspectives and confusion in the research field.

This doctoral dissertation takes a broad view of the conceptual field of power, drawing on Weber's (1947) definition and Pfeffer's (1981), Crozier's and Freidberg's (1982) notion of power. Like Crozier and Freidberg (1982), I agree that the power in question can be defined as

having a certain instrumental value, a kind of commodity that allows the violation of just exchange relations.

2.3. Structural and behavioural power asymmetry

Power in interorganisational relations is typically examined through two distinct lenses: the structural dimension and the behavioural dimension (Siemieniako and Mitreęa, 2019). The structure of power refers to the existing power asymmetry at a particular point in time, while the behavioural dimension concerns the ability of one party in the relationship to exercise power (Oukes et al., 2019).

When considering structural power, the relationship between the parties can be conceptualized as asymmetric, with influences stemming from various sources of power. Furthermore, a dyadic relationship is said to have power when one party holds more power than the other, resulting in a power asymmetry (Cox et al., 2004). Asymmetry, as depicted in extant literature, is linked to both negative and positive outcomes (Siemieniako and Mitreęa, 2019; Siemieniako et al., 2022). Negative consequences encompass instability and subpar performance arising from the power asymmetry (Hingley et al., 2015), inefficacy in collaborative activities (Siemieniako et al., 2022), conflicts or repression (Ojansivu et al., 2013), and the neglect of power held by the weaker party (Siemieniako and Mitreęa, 2019). Conversely, literature also highlights positive outcomes of power asymmetry, primarily in terms of its stabilizing effect, which aids in comprehending decision-making and role structures within a relationship (Caniëls and Gelderman, 2007). Multidimensional power asymmetry is shown in Figure 9.

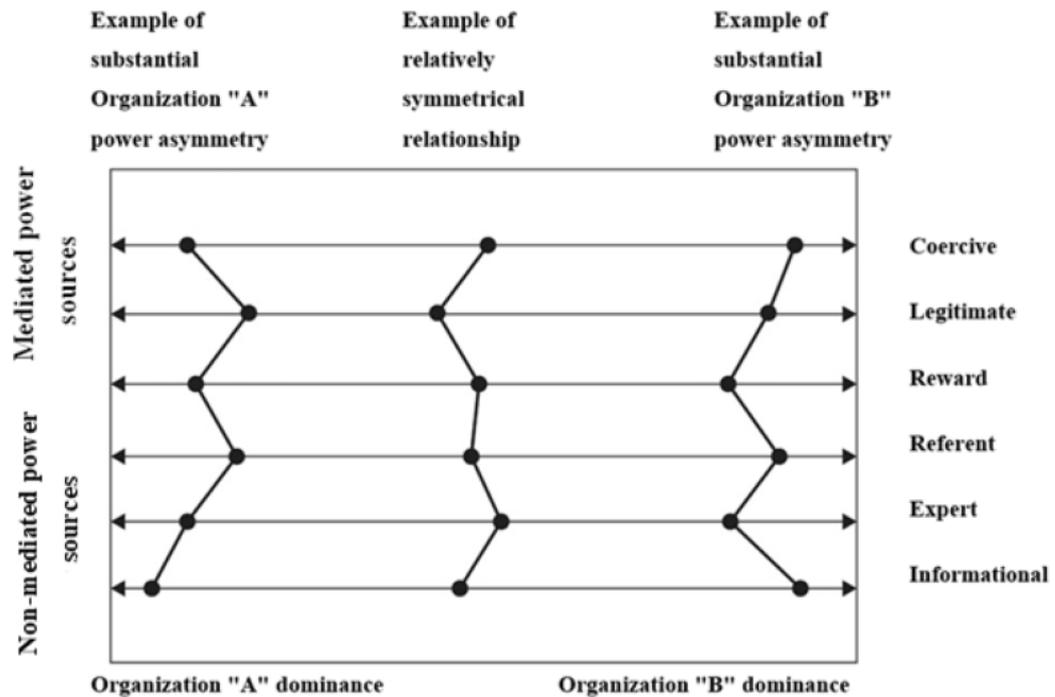


Figure 9. Multidimensional power asymmetry

Source: Siemieniako, Mitreęa, Makkonen and Pfajfar (2022, p. 10).

The literature also distinguishes between classifications relating to mediated and non-mediated power (Benton & Maloni, 2005). Mediated power is the potential of the power source to exploit the external motivation of the power target to meet the demands of the power source through the use of coercive power, legitimacy, or reward. Mediated power is considered negatively. On the other hand, non-mediated power only refers to the elements that cause the source of power and is considered positive (Benton & Maloni, 2005; Brown et al., 1995).

Behavioural power, as a key component of power research, is significant due to its origins in one side's actions to alter or exploit existing power within a relationship (Lacoste and Johnsen, 2015; Johnsen and Lacoste, 2016; Siemieniako and Kaliszewski, 2022). The volatility of power sources is often analysed in relation to the promise of future rewards or the threat of coercive power. Influence techniques are categorized into non-coercive, such as requests or recommendations, and coercive, such as promises or threats (Frazier and Summers, 1984).

Non-coercive influence strategies typically rely on attitudes within general business contexts and do not require pressure from the source of the relationship (Mishra and Banerjee, 2019). Conversely, coercive influence directly impacts the target, inducing behavioural changes or creating incompatibility (Gassenheimer and Ramsey, 1994). Similar distinctions are made in

other researchers' work, especially in the realm of power tactics (e.g. Lai, 2007; Chang and Huang, 2012).

In 2019, Mishra and Banerjee introduced a new concept for measuring non-coercive influence on upstream channel partners, which is assessed on a 12-point behavioural scale across 3 dimensions: dissemination of market information, intention to cooperate, and operational support (Mishra and Banerjee, 2019). The researchers emphasized that this concept can effectively influence partners' decisions when combined with the partner's intention to engage in joint behaviour. However, the study revealed that non-coercive influence strategies are predominantly useful for dominant companies, whereas less resourceful or dominated organisations are often swayed to employ alternative techniques. Previous research focused on tactics used by suppliers in small organisations in their relationships with dominant market players, identifying partner-specific investments and non-coercive strategies to enhance market and technological competencies (Pérez and Cambra-Fierro, 2015).

Power in the literature is conceptualized as a process through which certain groups or organisations influence the thoughts and feelings of others. The tactics employed by central companies to exert influence without coercion directly affect the perceptions of their upstream or downstream partners. This non-coercive influence differs from coercive tactics in that it emphasizes changing the mindset of the partnering organisations (Bourdieu, 1989).

Organisations that dominate other organisations are considered to have more power, which is manifested in high non-financial and financial performance. The purpose of dominant organisations is to exert a strong desire to create a vision of future long-term cooperation with other organisations that is beneficial to both parties. Such action not only reduces the concerns of the organisation with which the dominant firm cooperates, but also reduces the sense of unfair distribution of benefits resulting from this cooperation (Dyer and Singh, 1998; Dyer et al., 2008). As for the dominated organisations, which are usually smaller firms that have recently started up or are in the process of building a market position, their desire is to use non-coercive tactics to retain their contractors for as long as possible, thus offering them the prospect of transferring unique resources and new opportunities.

In asymmetric relationships, non-coercive behavioural power is the means of communication to convey the most relevant information, especially in channel and supply chain studies (Herbig, 1996). Behavioural power is the tactics of power, while structural power is the

position of power and resources, which is why the literature has shown that there may be a relationship between structural and behavioural aspects of power (Oukes et al., 2019).

Dependencies between organisations arise from differences in resources (Pfeffer, 1987), sometimes strong dependencies lead to mutual interactions, especially when the other party's resources are valuable and scarce. The relationships and dependencies between the two organisations are shown in Figure 10.

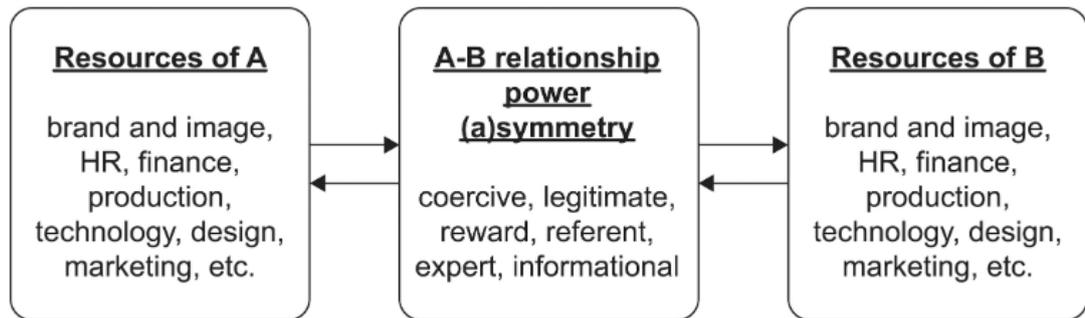


Figure 10. Power and resources in the working relationship between organisations A and B

Source: Siemieniako, Mitreęa, Makkonen and Pfajfar (2022, p. 12).

Figure 10 illustrates the relationship between hypothetical organisations A and B. The strength of the relationship between the organisations is directly proportional to the value of the resources possessed by one or both organisations. The exchange of resources resulting from the formation of relationships creates a sense of power symmetry. However, it can be misleading to assume that a balanced structure, resources or forms of power will make it easier to find another partner in the future. Although partners can provide access to important resources, they often use techniques that exaggerate their resources. The relationship between resources and power is not one-way, and it is not always the case that more resources mean more power. In the case of asymmetric responses, the distribution of benefits from the relationship is unequal (Dyer and Singh, 1998; Dyer et al., 2008). The power asymmetry resulting from the aforementioned difference in resources, as well as the use of power resulting from this asymmetry, leads to a reappraisal of the structure of the partners' resources. Importantly, a relationship based on asymmetric resources can lead either to an equalisation of resources between the parties or to a permanent disparity (Pérez and Cambra-Fierro, 2015).

One element of the relationship between organisations is the power asymmetry, both with elements of coercive and non-coercive influence (Blois, 2010). In addition to the distinctions arising from the use of power in a coercive or non-coercive manner, an interesting

perspective presented in the research concerns the division between the use of abusive power and its non-abusive use (Low and Li, 2019). Abuse of power is a situation in which the improvement of the conditions of one party is accompanied by a decrease in the quality of life of the other party, whereas power used properly improves the conditions of both parties (Low and Li, 2019). In business, such a division is not always visible at first glance, as many financial and non-financial benefits are hidden in the early stages of the relationship. One such example is shifting the cost of bank fees or setting fixed price terms to smaller suppliers in the case of international firms (Mishra and Banerjee, 2019).

During the crisis, larger national or international organisations reduced the number of suppliers by transferring costs to them. This was observed in studies by Mitreğa and Choi (2021) and Petraškevičius et al. (2022). The challenges are much stronger in the case of new social problems that emerged or were revealed during the COVID-19 pandemic. It may seem appropriate to analyse power in interorganisational relationships in terms of the interaction between expected benefits and power (Cowan et al., 2015). The matrix in Table 11 shows the overall power structure and the asymmetry between organisations.

Table 11. Power-benefit matrix in interorganisational relationships (perspective of the dominated organisation)

	Benefits below expectations	Benefits at or above expectations
High coercive power use	EXPLOITATIVE RELATIONSHIP	TOLERABLE RELATIONSHIP
Low coercive power use	AWKWARD RELATIONSHIP	IDEAL RELATIONSHIP

Source: Siemieniako, Mitreğa, Makkonen and Pfajfar (2022, p. 13).

An interesting concept from the point of view and understanding of asymmetric relationships between organisations is also the concept of hegemony and the cultural aspect of power, which is emphasised in research on interorganisational and business relationships (Johnsen et al., 2020). Specifically, the dominance of the stronger party over the weaker one, which is coercive, i.e. through the abuse of trust and the use of unilateral agreements, the stronger organisations control the weaker organisations in every aspect of the relationship. Interestingly, a given level of control can even be exercised throughout the supply chain. According to some researchers, the concept of power in interorganisational relationships is

narrower than the concept of hegemony, because hegemony goes beyond market dominance and also affects socially accepted values (Johnsen et al., 2020). Research shows that dominance based on hegemony, as opposed to dominance based on power alone, is based on socially accepted behaviour due to the ideological context (Johnsen et al., 2020). In terms of hegemonic relationships, they give rise to a variety of scenarios, firstly, they can lead to weaker organisations accepting the status quo, or they can lead to excessive activity in order to gain ideological control over hegemonic organisations. The concept described above is relevant to all asymmetric relationships between organisations, not only in the case of multinational companies working with smaller suppliers, but also in the case of local business networks. Hegemonic relationships have many negative as well as positive characteristics. The negatives include instability, abuse in the workplace and, for small organisations, the inability to focus on long-term decisions due to an insecure position in the supply chain. On the positive side, I can mention the creation of a climate for international cooperation or the widespread acceptance of a certain form of relationship in modern markets.

The literature review shows that power is an extremely important phenomenon in interorganisational relations, and that it takes several forms that can be divided into two categories: non-coercive and coercive. In order to fully understand the meaning of power, it is necessary to take into account its cultural determinants, e.g., by applying a constructivist approach to power, and it is worth remembering that there is a difference between power itself and its actual use. Power in an organisation is a phenomenon consisting of the objective characteristics of the organisation that possesses it and the perception of the influence of this power by another party (Kähkönen and Lintukangas, 2012). This is particularly important when measuring power between organisations, which are not always equal when identifying objective differences between two organisations, especially those of different sizes (Hopkinson and Blois, 2014). It is worth mentioning that not every power and not every use of power should be accepted only by the dominant actors, due to the fact that ideological influence is the result of the opinions of many actors in a relationship or legitimacy, which in the literature can be defined as the general assumption that the actions performed by an actor are acceptable, appropriate, congruent or desirable within a socially functioning system of values, norms, definitions and beliefs (Suchman, 1995, p. 574), not only from the perspective of the relationship between the dominant supplier/customer and the dominant customer/supplier. Dyadic relationships are usually a very limited perspective of power analysis, because the broader circumstances of its analysis are more valuable, especially those that show indirect relationships where party A has

power over party B as a result of the actions of party C (Makkonen and Olkkonen, 2017). In the multidimensional aspect of interorganisational relationships, the actual use of power should be based on the elements that connect the dyadic relationship with other parties to this relationship and show to what extent there is a relationship between the dyadic actors and the relationship in a given relationship.

The analysis of power is also an interesting phenomenon from the point of view of the ideological or cultural influence of global companies on small companies, but also in the area of differences in different national cultures in the context of power. The literature often confirms that different power tactics in interorganisational relations are dependent and culturally different, e.g. Johnson et al. (1993) found that in Japan referential and legal power is treated as aggressive, whereas in Western culture it is treated as a non-aggressive form of power. A 2001 study found that conducting research in one Asian country does not translate to all other Asian countries, because in China, suppliers consider only coercive power to be aggressive, while informational, referential, expert, justifiable or rewarding power are considered non-aggressive forms of power (Lee, 2001). In the Netherlands and the USA, the principle of equality and all the injustices that result from it have a particular impact on power (Scheer et al., 2003). Furthermore, tactics that work against the equality movement, especially in Western culture, would also be unacceptable in public discourse (Horak and Long, 2018).

Research on power can be difficult due to cultural differences between countries, which often make it impossible to apply consistent measurement systems. Consequently, power theory that is applicable to Western context may insufficiently and/or inappropriately account for the most relevant factors that influence the performance in other cultural regions (Hopkinson and Blois, 2014). Due to the cultural context, it is worth conducting research within a unified geopolitical perspective, which will allow for a better understanding of power in this area.

2.4. Power in management sciences

Organisations in the 21st century are under enormous political control (Fleming and Spicer, 2014). On the other hand, multinational corporations very often not only try to intervene in public debates, but also to influence public policy. Often it is large organisation that have the last word, not national governments. Increasingly, social groups concerned about the enormous power of organisations are trying to limit it. Within the organisations themselves, there are also

important actors or players who are either listened to or ignored, especially the latter who try hard to compete for influence. Power is therefore not an exceptional phenomenon, but the basis for the functioning of any organisation, which is why, according to Clegg et al., (2006) the effect of power on an organisation can be compared to the effect of oxygen on the breathing process. It would seem, therefore, that concepts of power are needed to manage, change and shape power in the organisation. In the social sciences it is common to see a combination of power and domination in organisations. For example, according to M. Weber (1978), power is the ability of an actor to achieve his or her goal in a social relationship despite opposition (Weber, 1978) and even against opposition - and regardless of what that ability is based on (Galbraith and Bartel, 1983). Most people therefore define organisational politics as a strategy and tactics for presenting their needs and trying to get them accepted, especially when the interests or goals of the organisation are different.

This understanding of power is not without complications, if only because Weber's definition sees power as the privilege of individuals. Subsequent researchers followed the above approach to power and divided the types of power into coercive power, reward power, legitimate power, referential power and expert power (French and Raven, 1968). Later management research distinguished and showed the relational side of power before showing the structural relationships. For example, departments in an organisation have little power in themselves, but when combined with other departments they create relational dependencies (Hickson et al., 1971). The basis of interorganisational power is the creation and maintenance of similar relationships (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1974), and interorganisational relations in context of power can be described as a phenomenon co-occurring with forces operating in the wider social context (Astley and Sachdeva, 1984). In the approach of subsequent researchers, the dominant belief has been that power does not reside in any one member, but lies between individuals, parties or organisations (Sewell, 1998).

"The social sciences often conflate power and politics in and around organisations. So it is important to make an analytical distinction between the two concepts" (Fleming and Spicer, 2014, p. 2). However, it is often a tendency to ignore the political dimension in the concept of power (Avelino, 2021). For example, in classical organisational theory, ordered social action was seen as opposed to political action (Perrow, 1972). Research conducted in the latter half of the 20th century has shown that individuals often exceed the legitimate authority granted to them by their position (Fleming and Spicer, 2014). According to M. Crozier, an individual's power within an organisation depends on their ability to reduce uncertainty (Crozier, 1964).

Hinings et al. (1974) found that when a company has control over both external and internal sources of uncertainty, a particular sub-unit tends to have more power than expected.

Organisations are interacted with by both the state and civil society (Böhm et al., 2008), but my work will mainly focus on examining organisational power and not necessarily the political aspects of power between civil society and the state. Much of the literature presents a negative image of power and negative connotations in organisational and interorganisational life because it means subordination of positions, coercion or maintaining a hierarchy. However, power does not always have to be viewed negatively, equating it with devious politics to be avoided. Some researchers point out that power can have a positive impact and enable the achievement of difficult yet great goals (Clegg et al., 2006). In order to explain a large number of mainly negative and positive opinions about power, I will create my own taxonomy of power in management and quality sciences in the sub-discipline of strategic managements, and its interorganisational relations research area.

An integrative review is an academic study that synthesizes, synthesizes, and synthesizes on a particular topic. A particular type of literature review mainly serves to show new perspectives and frameworks of a given view. As Snyder (2019) noted, a literature review, because of its comparison and combination of many different analyses and empirical findings, can address research questions more powerfully than a single study (Snyder, 2019). Based on the foundational reviews in management sciences by Fleming and Spicer (2007), Lukes (2005), and Fleming and Spicer (2014), power can be episodic in the case of coercion and manipulation, or long-term in the case of domination and empowerment. According to the literature, power is divided into 4 categories: coercion, manipulation, domination and subjectivation, and can take place in every part of the organisation (see Table 12).

Table 12. Types of power

Types of power in Management sciences	Description	Theoretical roots	Core Mechanisms and Representative Studies
Coercion	Direct mobilization of power	Dahl (1957)	Formal position - Weber (1923); Personality - House et al. (1968); Ability to reduce uncertainty - Crozier (1964); Possession of valuable resources - Pfeffer and Salancik (1974); Social embeddedness in mobilizing resources between newly-formed organisations - Villanueva, Van de Ven and Sapienza (2012)

Manipulation	Attempts to ensure action and discussion occurs within accepted boundaries	Bachrach and Baratz (1962)	Manipulation of rules - Selznick (1949); Shaping anticipated results - Gouldner (1970); Network positioning - Burt (1995); Mobilization of bias - Alexander (1979); Manipulating the bottom line - Delaney (1994)
Domination	Attempts to make relations of power appear inevitable and natural	Lukes (1974)	Articulating ideology - Alvesson (1987); Manufacturing consent - Burawoy (1979); Conformity with institutions - Fligstein (1987); Logic of power – Soontornthum, Cui, Lu, Su (2020)
Subjectification	Attempts to shape sense of self, experiences and emotions	Foucault (1977)	Disciplinary regimes - Townley (1993); Construction of identities - Du Gay (1996); Articulation of discourse - Maguire and Hardy (2009); Governmentality - Holmqvist and Maravalis (2011);

Source: Fleming and Spicer (2014, p. 54)³.

2.5. The importance of the power asymmetry in interorganisational relations

As described in Chapter 1 of this dissertation, interorganisational relations, which refer to the relations between or among two or more organisations or between the organisation and its environment (Mesjasz, 1995; Oliver, 1990; Van de Ven and Walker, 1984), are the subject of interest in many areas of management sciences. Interorganisational relationships are diverse in nature, but they are united by the fact that they are one of the most important resources contributing to the creation of a firm's competitive advantage in the market (Czakoń, 2012a; Rzepka, 2017; Zakrzewska-Bielawska, 2018). Since the intention of individual firms to establish new business activities with other firms has emerged as a frequently used approach to stay at the forefront of technological innovation and gain a superior competitive advantage, interorganisational relationships have become a key topic in recent years (Agostini et al., 2019). As a result, they have been at the centre of interest in management sciences for years, mainly in the scientific fields of management sub-disciplines, organisational behaviour and strategic management.

Research on interorganisational relations has been conducted at three levels: the dyad, the action set, and the network. Hall (1987) studied the dyad, Hirsch (1972) examined the action

³ Other sources cited after the Author.

set, and Galaskiewicz (1985) analyzed the network. The latter, networking, is becoming one of the key categories in management sciences (Ring and Van de Ven, 1994). Empirical examples of interorganisational relationships seem to be ubiquitous in management practice. They may include, for example, relations between firms, relations between firms and public authorities, relations between public authorities, relations between firms and non-governmental organisations, relations between public authorities and non-governmental organisations, or relations between non-governmental organisations. Through interorganisational cooperation, organisations can strengthen their position in the environment and make better use of their resources and skills. Interorganisational cooperation can be initiated by other organisations, by other stakeholders of the organisation or by central or local authorities. Cooperation depends on the operating and development strategy adopted by the enterprise, as well as on the ability to manage cooperation and to use the available legal and organisational forms of cooperation. Certainly, skilful cooperation with external bodies is increasingly a source of advantage for some organisations over others.

Power asymmetry in interorganisational relations refers to situations where one company within an alliance gains significantly more or less power than another company outside the alliance (Caniëls and Roeleveld, 2009; Pfeffer, 1981; Wang, 2011). Literature on this topic has showcased diverse findings regarding the impact of power asymmetry on enterprise alliances, ranging from positive (Benton and Maloni, 2005; Cox et al., 2004) to negative (Inkpen and Beamish, 1997; Provan and Skinner, 1989). Given the significance of building relationships for modern technology enterprises in the ICT sector (Polak, 2016). The relationship is more likely to remain undisturbed when the capabilities, resources and characteristics of the partners determine a good match, and the relationship is characterised by a certain degree of complementarity (Tu, 2010). The asymmetry can be explained, for example, by differences in firm size (as measured by employment) and differences in certain individual relationship characteristics (Johnsen and Ford, 2008).

Another of the reason that the process of interorganisational cooperation is very complex is undoubtedly numerous asymmetries, which is why it is so important to study all the factors that influence the process of building relationships between organisations and the success of such cooperation (Dasí-Rodríguez and Pardo-Del-Val, 2015). This is why it is so important to learn all the factors that influence the greater success of lasting relationships and the reduction of barriers that result from asymmetric relationships between companies in the ICT sector (Palmatier et al., 2006). Most of the studies in the available literature on the creation of

relationships and technological cooperation between companies only examine the impact of one factor on the relationship between cooperating organisations, and the research is carried out by studying a specific statistical population. However, the following are the most frequently mentioned factors influencing the power asymmetry between organisations (Castañer and Oliveira, 2020; Fousiani, 2022):

- Organisational culture of a given organisation;
- Intensity of interaction;
- Information asymmetry;
- Additional resources in the organisation;
- Clarity of goals and responsibilities between organisations;
- Regulatory and management body;
- Mutual understanding of the parties;
- A real need to collaborate with another organisation;
- Financial benefits;
- Access to new sales markets;
- Benefit from the partner's knowledge and experience;
- Increase in the quality and effectiveness of activities;
- Possibility to use tools and equipment from another organisation;
- Synergy effect;
- Awareness of mutual benefits;
- Increase in the scale of operations.

As I mentioned above, there may be many reasons for establishing interorganisational relationships, starting with necessity, interaction, efficiency, stability, legitimacy or even asymmetry. The last one is particularly direct from the perspective of this work, as it is the basis for the decision to start cooperation, with the principle that it is rarely dictated in detail by exercising control over the effective activities or resources of the partner. Then the motive of cooperation is operational, thanks to which influence is obtained. Dominance in interorganisational relations can affect the relationship between the parties. The relationship has a direct impact on the weaker cooperation partner when its resources develop despite the asymmetric relationship, and it has an impact when the older partner uses resources in a predatory way. As noted by Oliver (1990), asymmetry occurs when one party to a relationship exercises power over the other party to the relationship. Such behaviour is the cause of the

power asymmetry that leads to a reduction in relational flexibility in the organisations involved in the relationship.

The power asymmetry in an organisation affects its flexibility. The main factors for this are differences in partner switching costs, dependence on the other partner, contract structure, size, expertise, or relationship quality (Belaya et al., 2009; You and Williams, 2023). An organisation with more power may exploit the asymmetric relationship to appropriate more value, potentially reducing the ability to rebound. However, such behaviour may lead to a breakdown in the relationship, causing the weaker partner to withdraw, pursue legal action, or create conflict, thus weakening flexibility and resilience.

Low-status organisations with an ownership advantage may engage higher-status partners to gain attention and status (Emerson, 1962). However, it is important to note that such status-based affiliations may limit their autonomy. It is crucial to maintain objectivity and avoid subjective evaluations. If the ownership advantage is significant enough to overcome this status constraint, power source matching can be even more beneficial (Ma et al., 2013). Nevertheless, if the ownership advantage is too limited to absorb the status constraint, disorderly interaction may hinder the effectiveness of the interorganisational relationship (Ma et al., 2013). Recent research on this topic also shows that interorganisational relationships based on asymmetry are highly susceptible to disruption (Andersson et al., 2019; You and Williams, 2023). It is directly related to the definition of boundaries between the organisation and its stakeholders in the area of power and information, and the resistance to disruption in the organisation depends on cooperation within the system as a whole (Andersson et al., 2019). In the light of the findings in this chapter, it should be recognised that the need to manage power in interorganisational relations is extremely important.

2.6. Summary

The research question (SRQ2) that this chapter sought to answer was - What factors determine the power asymmetry in interorganisational relations? In this chapter, I have used an integrative review as a research method. It was found that the factors that determine power and power asymmetry in interorganisational relations refer to the ability to exercise control or power over resources or another organisation. The reason for the presence of power in interorganisational relationships is a function of, among other things, the size of the organisation, effective strategy, resource scarcity and control over companies with scarce

resources. Establishing an interorganisational relationship requires sacrificing freedom and autonomy in decision-making in favour of joint decision-making. On the one hand, the organisation wants to have full control over its decisions, and on the other hand, it is reluctant to give up control over another organisation, which implies and shows an asymmetric picture of the decision to create interorganisational interactions. Therefore, the formation of interorganisational relationships is influenced not only by resources, but also by the desire to exercise greater power.

The answer to this question was related to the scientific objective of identifying of the power asymmetry factors in interorganisational relations. Current research trends indicate a growing interest in power in interorganisational relations. More and more researchers are looking for a golden mean in the position of power as a result of a long-term management process. However, the goal of the ideal symmetry of power in interorganisational relations seems abstract, not only because it may be economically ineffective, but also because of the complexity of relational power itself and the number of its sources. Dominance in one source of power can be offset by dominance in another. Organisations in a relationship should not aim for an ideal symmetry of power in practice, because organisations differ from each other and these differences are necessary to derive benefits from the relationship, for example as a result of complementarity. In light of the above, it is not important to aim for an ideal symmetrical relationship, but to manage the asymmetrical relationship in such a way that the interorganisational relationships do not suffer as a result of the asymmetry. Therefore, in my opinion the supporting objective (SRO2) undertaken in this chapter has been achieved.

Chapter 3

MANAGING THE POWER ASYMETRY IN THE ICT SECTOR

3.1. Introduction

The ICT sector is one of the key actors in technological development (Świadek et al., 2022). Furthermore, the development of information technologies is fundamental for the growth of not only the ICT sector but also the entire economy and society (Polish Agency for Enterprise Development, 2017). Due to ongoing digitalisation, all sectors of the economy generate demand for products offered by the ICT sector: private sector and consumers, non-governmental organisations, and public administration institutions. As a result of ongoing digitalisation, every area of life is generating an ever-increasing demand for services and products from the ICT sector.

In view of the above, the aim of this chapter is to answer the first additional research question (SRQ3) posed in this study: What are the methods and advantages to manage the power asymmetry in interorganisational relations and why is stakeholder relationships management important in the ICT sector? Formulating an answer to the research question presented will achieve the supporting objective (SRO3) of explaining the methods and advantages of managing power asymmetry and stakeholder relationships management in companies from the ICT sector.

The chapter will begin with a description of power asymmetry management models for a better understanding in which a systematic literature review will be used as the research method. The next section will describe the specificity of ICT sector enterprises in Poland and the final section will describe the characteristics of the mechanism of asymmetric relations between enterprises in the ICT sector in Poland.

3.2. Power asymmetry management models – a systematic literature review

In the context of technological enterprises, firms engage with stakeholders who can either facilitate or hinder the creation and dissemination of technology, with these processes increasingly influenced by factors not traditionally considered in management models. This is partly because enterprises in the modern economy continually seek solutions to achieve market success (Saqib and Satar, 2021). An important strategic asset for companies is the ability to create and manage relationships (Kauffman and Pointer, 2022). The exchange of goods and services based on partnership relationships refers to a process in which the supplier and the recipient form strong economic, social and technical ties with the aim of increasing the value provided while reducing transaction costs (Zaefarian et al., 2017). This behaviour results in mutual benefits. Most companies base their activities on the dependence on the resources provided by the cooperator in a situation of limited availability of alternatives and high costs of changing a cooperator (Tyszkiewicz, 2017).

The research conducted by Harrigan (1983) shows that the asymmetry in the relationships between organisations has a destabilising effect on these relationships (Harrigan, 1983). These findings were further supported and confirmed by Bruckner (2007). A systematic literature review (SLR) allows for the identification, selection and critical appraisal of research to answer a clearly formulated question (Dewey and Drahota, 2016). It is a reliable method of conducting research because each systematic review is conducted according to certain clearly defined principles, with a protocol or plan that specifies the criteria before the review is conducted. The relationship is more likely to remain undisturbed when the skills, resources and characteristics of these determine a good match of the relationship between the partners and the relationship is characterised by a certain level of complementarity (Tu, 2010). The asymmetry can be explained, for example, by differences in firm size (as measured by employment) and differences in certain individual relationship characteristics (Johnsen and Ford, 2008). For example, one can refer to the results of research on power, commitment, dependence or knowledge, which can be the subject of the emergence of asymmetry in relationships (Caniëls et al., 2018; Gundlach et al., 1995; Holmlund and Kock, 1996).

In order to recognise the interest in the topic of power asymmetry management models, I decided to search for articles in the Web of Science, Scopus and Google Scholar databases. In order to obtain the most up-to-date items available in the literature, the year 2023 was selected, although the review was carried out between July and August 2023. From 1990 to 2023, 932 articles in the Scopus database and 550 articles in the Web of Science database were retrieved for the above topic. Another remarkable result of the data analysis is that many publications

were published in 2023. For this reason, 2023 was chosen as the end date for this literature search. For the refined literature search in the Web of Science, Google Scholar and Scopus databases, I used a number of alternative topic keywords, including combinations such as "power asymmetry management models", "power asymmetry in strategic management", "models to managing the power asymmetry", "models in management for power asymmetry" and "models to manage power asymmetry". First, after applying three criteria: years - "1950-2023", type - "article" and language - "English", 284 articles were found. After applying the next criterion, which selected only articles written on the topic of business and management, only 116 articles remained. After eliminating duplicates, 62 articles remained. During the initial screening process, which involved only reviewing the abstracts, two articles were excluded. During the second screening process, which the purpose was to thoroughly examine the abstract, introduction, and conclusion sections, 4 articles were excluded as they were irrelevant to the study. Some publications only had abstracts written in English, so three articles were excluded. Therefore, the final sample used for the literature review consists of 53 published papers. The results of this literature review are presented below.

The initial research assumption is that the so-called transactional approach is increasingly being replaced by the relational approach in the financial services or ICT sector (in sectors concerned with offering intangible goods and services to consumers), especially in terms of strategy building and long-term development. Following this management approach, according to which companies of different sizes and in different industries can achieve their financial and market goals more effectively by cooperating with other companies than by going it alone, the question whether companies in the ICT sector using the so-called relational approach can also achieve their financial goals more effectively by cooperating will be answered.

Given that business organisations are partnerships of dissimilar interests (Mithani and O'Brien, 2021), as there are groups and people whose interests are related to its functioning, the work will also take into account the theory of stakeholders, which analyses the nature of the relationship between the company and its stakeholders from the point of view of the benefits of these relationships. In the relational approach, cooperation is about generating above-average benefits (Czakon, 2005) from functioning in the interorganisational space, in which the organisation is connected to a set of external relations: a system of behaviours, actions, interactions, decisions and resources with other entities (Kawa and Pierański, 2015). Behind the foundation of the relational approach is the assumption that the goal is to achieve relational

rent (Zakrzewska-Bielawska, 2018), which by definition should complement the total economic rent generated by the organisation.

Many researchers consider asymmetry as a natural feature of exchangeable relationships, which is reflected in the fact that power asymmetry in interorganisational relationships has already been studied in many academic projects and from the perspective of many theoretical approaches (Belaya and Hanf, 2012). Companies that cooperate with each other are rarely similar in terms of competences and resources (Małys and Berckhan, 2016). In fact, one might even expect differentiation between partners, as such differentiation increases the likelihood of synergistic effects (e.g. through joint integration of processes in the supply chain or joint creation of new products). However, like asymmetry in all kinds of human relationships, asymmetry in contractor relationships is risky, especially from the perspective of the weaker party, because such a weaker party-company may feel used and become reluctant to undertake further joint projects, reducing the potential for relationship benefits for both. It should also be remembered that interorganisational relations, like all other social relations, are very complex and dynamic phenomena, which means, among other things, that there is a high probability of the destruction of a partnership that has initially developed very favourably.

In the case of asymmetric relationships, unfavourable dynamics are particularly dangerous for the weaker party, which may find itself in a trap associated with previous one-sided investments and high legal barriers and costs resulting from the change of contractor (Alrosjid et al., 2022; Kowalska-Musiał, 2006). All this justifies the desire to broaden knowledge about effective methods of managing power in business relationships from the perspective of a stronger and weaker contractor, as such studies have not yet been carried out in this area. At the same time, it can be assumed that the management tools developed should not expose any businesses to a higher risk of the strategic partner leaving. The importance of this phenomenon is clear and is confirmed by the large number of publications on the subject, nevertheless there is still no comprehensive literature review on this topic, which makes it difficult to fully understand and systematise the existing knowledge on power and power asymmetry in business relationships (Brzustewicz et al., 2017; Szota and Woźniak., 2021). A systematic analysis of the existing literature will be treated as a starting point for own empirical research and considerations in the further part of this doctoral dissertation.

Research based on the existence of countervailing power concerns the study of the customer-supplier relationship, indicating that power in this relationship can be used for the benefit of suppliers (Lacoste and Johnsen, 2015). An inescapable aspect of the supplier-buyer

relationship is the power asymmetry in the dyadic relationship, which not only affects the cooperative and adaptive behaviour of the weaker party, but also allows the stronger party to take advantage of the opportunity (Cox et al., 2004; Nyaga et al., 2013).

The stronger side of the relationship uses its power in operational and strategic areas, while the weaker side of the relationship has to accept the control of the stronger side in its business activities, both in strategic and operational areas (Johnsen and Ford, 2008). In the literature on the subject, we can find also publications describing power asymmetries focus on their positive qualities (Belaya et al., 2009). The representative of the above-mentioned scientific trend is Hingley, who in his publication points out that asymmetry does not limit the development of relationships (Hingley, 2005). Moreover, asymmetry makes it possible to obtain mutual benefits for the parties to the relationship, which generally outweigh any possible negative effects. The impact of asymmetry also depends on the size of the entities it affects, e.g. weaker organisations are characterised by a greater degree of tolerance towards the occurrence of asymmetry compared to larger entities, and moreover the occurrence of asymmetry affects the stabilisation of relationships that are part of weaker organisations (Lawler and Yoon, 1996). As for larger entities, their position in the environment of the existence of power asymmetry may positively affect their integration and organisational possibilities and the resolution of possible conflicts involving weaker entities (Belaya et al., 2009).

According to Meehan and Wright (2012), there has been a significant shift in power from retailers to suppliers. Large retailers who contract with smaller retailers are in a position of power because small retailers may be disadvantaged in their dealings. Therefore, being in a position of strength affects the competitive advantage of the organisation (Hines and McGowan, 2005; Hingley, 2005). Retailers may take control of branding from the supplier, as research has shown that suppliers do not use their own brand when producing goods exclusively for large retailers (Meehan and Wright, 2012).

Cowan, Paswan and Van Steenburg (2015) found that strength in social exchange can be understood as power, the potential to influence the behaviour of others. This can happen when one firm demands something that is inconsistent with what another firm wants, and a firm that is able to meet the demands shows resistance. Power in two-component business relationships can be classified as symmetrical and asymmetrical in terms of the position of power (Cowan et al., 2015). According to Dwyer and Walker, power asymmetry is an imbalance of interdependence, meaning that the stronger party dominates and independently controls the binary business relationship (Dwyer and Walker, 1981).

Research on power in business relationships and information asymmetry is particularly relevant, as the number of studies has increased significantly in recent years (Wiktor and Sanak-Kosmowska, 2021; Zadykowicz et al., 2020). Behaviours regarding power in relationships can range from exploitation to win-win problem solving. However, from the early 1980s until today, building and maintaining business relationships remains a very important area of management theory and practice (Sudolska, 2011). Over the years, the role of interorganisational relationships has become increasingly important, mainly due to the uncertainty resulting from the volatility and instability of the environment (Ābeltiņa and Rizhamadze, 2021). Researchers agree that in this situation, building positive, long-term relationships with partners significantly contributes to increasing mutual profits and market share, and therefore remains a strategic factor for the long-term success of businesses (Lostakova and Pecinova, 2014). It has not been explored whether power and power asymmetry are commonly considered as inherent features of interorganisational relationships in the ICT sector. This problem has not been solved by any of the existing studies or research. Gray, Purdy and Ansari (2022) identified a research gap in the analysis of power and its asymmetry in interorganisational relations. This text aims to address this gap by providing a complete identification of research areas.

Extensive research in Poland has shown that establishing and maintaining relationships is of key importance in managing a business (Leszczyński and Zieliński, 2008; Ratajczak-Mrozek, Wiczerzycki and Hauke-Lopes, 2021). Similar results have been found abroad (Hollyoake, 2009). The conditions for establishing and developing relationships are contextual. Contextual conditions are defined by the character of the relationship, which can be described in terms of power and dependency, the state of conflict or cooperation, the overall closeness or distance of the relationship, and the mutual expectations of the parties to the relationship. The literature review leads to the conclusion that the atmosphere of the relationship becomes the key and main factor in the development of the relationship between companies and the shaping of the characteristics of this relationship over time. One of the dimensions of the atmosphere of the relationship is power, the consequence of which is power asymmetry, the dependence of one of the parties on the partner (Zieliński and Kubacki, 2014).

Power in a given relationship results from the level of alternative economic and social benefits that a given entity can derive from participating in another relationship and from the existing barriers to breaking the relationship - external, resulting from economic, legal or social factors, and internal, psychological costs of breaking the relationship (Zieliński, 2014). In any interorganisational relationship, the balance of power and the degree of dependence or

interdependence shape the atmosphere of the exchange processes and the relationship itself. The feeling of power or dependence is subjective and results from individual situations. As companies interact, their nature and outcome lead to the development of the perception of the power of the entities in the relationship and the propensity to use it. The perceived level of power is important not because of its use, but because the partners have the knowledge that this power exists (McGrath et al., 2017).

Anderson, Narus and Narayandas see power as the ability to influence a partner to take actions that they would not have taken in an equilibrium relationship (Anderson et al., 2008). The degree of power between firms in a collaborative network is important because it indicates how dependent or independent they are of other actors. Power can be described in terms of the dependency and independence perceived by actors in relation to other entities in the enterprise network and in terms of the degree of power of the relationship (Henneberg et al., 2006).

Power asymmetry in interorganisational relationships can result from several factors, both positive: profitability of cooperation, obtaining extraordinary benefits, and negative: no alternative, the amount of loss caused by the termination of the relationship (Geersbro and Ritter, 2012). The research conducted so far shows that in interorganisational relationships, power and dependence are not evenly distributed. The participation of small and medium-sized suppliers in asymmetric relationships and a strong dependence on business partners is risky and requires the use of appropriate management tools. This risk is particularly important from the point of view of small and medium-sized suppliers, as a weaker company may feel used and therefore less willing to continue the cooperation, which in turn limits the use of the full potential of the activity carried out.

Various elements are seen as key, viewing inequalities as arising at the intersection of the three dimensions of asymmetry - market power asymmetry, social power asymmetry and political power asymmetry - that underpin and crystallise around global value chains (Ormrod, 2017). Policy can have a significant impact on knowledge sharing across sectoral, organisational and professional boundaries (Herlin, 2015). Shared dependence positively influences socially responsible supply chain management, while supplier power limits it. Some researchers proposed a double tactical approach towards business partners, especially towards large, dominant customers: on the one hand, allocating resources as long as it is safe and beneficial, and on the other hand, learning, developing one's own competences and being open to innovation (Siemieniako and Mitreęa, 2018). In asymmetric interorganisational relationships, the stronger party is likely to be able to dominate and exercise power over the

contract, and thus determine the processes and outcomes of the relationship (Arbussa et al., 2017). The stakeholder framework can be usefully extended in three areas: the power asymmetry of the final stakeholders, the asymmetry of the importance of stakeholders in different organisational phenomena, and the asymmetry in time (Byrne and Power, 2014; Papadopoulos and Roumpakis, 2013). See Table 13 for other power management models.

Table 13. Power management models found in the literature

Authors	Description
French and Raven (1959)	<p>model posits six bases of social power: reward, coercion, legitimacy, expertise, reference, and information;</p> <p>shows how different forms of power have an impact on one's leadership and success;</p> <p>in the expanded model, coercion and reward can have personal and impersonal forms;</p> <p>expert and referent power can be negative or positive;</p> <p>in the extended model, variables such as assessment of available power bases in terms of potential effectiveness, motivations of the influence agent, personal preferences, values and norms, and time perspective are used for research.</p> <p>even more advanced variables examine manipulation, the use of preparatory and stage devices to strengthen power resources, the assessment of the effectiveness of the influence attempt and its positive/negative consequences, and the use of mitigating measures.</p>
Robicheaux and El-Ansary (1975)	<p>model for understanding channel member behaviour;</p> <p>both power and conflict are considered as functions of the interdependence between organisations.</p>
Anderson and Narus (1990)	<p>model of distributor working partnerships;</p> <p>distributor organisation model for the respecification of cooperation as an antecedent rather than a consequence of trust.</p>
Gassenheimer, Calantone, Schmitz and Robicheaux (1994)	<p>EQS model in order to examine and explain the differential effects between the weaker party's</p> <p>economic dependence and role performance on a weaker dyad member's behaviour and attitude toward maintaining relationships with its preferred suppliers</p>
Hofstede (2001)	<p>the pyramid model for managing organisations across nations;</p> <p>managing power asymmetry by referring to hierarchy and horizontal negotiation or establishing procedures;</p> <p>organisations with a hidden structure are present in societies with low power distance and low uncertainty avoidance; workflow bureaucracy in countries with low power distance and high uncertainty avoidance; and complete bureaucracy in societies characterized by high power distance and high uncertainty avoidance.</p>
Rahim, Antonioni and Psenicka (2001)	<p>model of leader power;</p> <p>"...legitimate power influenced referent power positively and coercive power negatively, and reward and legitimate powers positively influenced expert power, which in turn, positively influenced referent power. Referent power, in turn, positively influenced problem solving (i.e., using more integrating and less avoiding styles) and negatively influenced bargaining (i.e., using more dominating and less obliging styles) conflict-management styles, and finally, problem solving style, but not bargaining style, positively influenced job performance" (Rahim et al., 2001 p. 191).</p>

Wang, Na and Hua, Ying and Wu, Guoying and Zhao, Chunxia and Wang, Yonggui, (2019)	moderated mediation model; shows how reverse transfer of innovation impacts subsidiary power through formal attention of the parent company; formal attention of the parent company fully mediates the relationship between reverse transfer of innovation and subsidiary power.
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Source: own elaboration based on Siemieniako, Mitreġa, Makkonen and Pfajfar (2022 pp. 83-95).

The introduction of innovation also reduces power asymmetry and information (Scott and White, 2013). Elements such as getting to know managers, reorganising resources, environmental elements or organisational culture should be taken into account for the successful implementation of innovations. More attention should be paid to the potential power asymmetry among participants and its potential impact on the formation of a common schema and subsequent new procedures, in addition to interaction and role taking (Belso-Martínez et al., 2015; Cheung et al., 2008; Lin, Chen and Su, 2017). Research suggests that the interaction between trust and innovation varies across markets (Khoja et al., 2015). Research into the behaviour of firms in asymmetric environments in mature and emerging markets has found that, despite the asymmetry effect, higher levels of maturity are more conducive to IT innovation (Ryan et al., 2020). This is explained by the power asymmetry between partners, as well as cultural barriers and lack of cultural sensitivity (Voldnes and Grønhaug, 2015). However, the degree of involvement of the various entities in this process is particularly important in addressing the issue of power asymmetry and in determining this asymmetry (Magala et al., 2019). In the above collection of publications, many authors have addressed the issue of asymmetry in information and communication technologies. Information and communication technologies (ICTs) have the potential to improve access to technological innovation. However, it is difficult to determine whether ICT reduces power asymmetry or reinforces pre-existing power asymmetry due to inequalities in access and technological skills (Chenou et al., 2019). Power asymmetry is also related to competition (Conrad et al., 2021; Franchino and Mariotto, 2021). That artificial intelligence (AI) can bring significant benefits is generally accepted by both practitioners and scientists, but the downsides of AI are less discussed and less understood (Grewal et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2021). "There has been an increased focus within the AI ethics literature on questions of power, reflected in the ideal of accountability supported by many Responsible AI guidelines. While this recent debate points towards the power asymmetry between those who shape AI systems and those affected by them, the literature lacks normative grounding and misses conceptual clarity on how these power dynamics take shape" (Maas, 2022

p. 1493). As emphasised by J. Światowiec-Szczepańska, the development of integrated network companies forces changes in the relationships of companies in the network, because in network management the ability to cooperate and communicate becomes the main competence of the company, which determines the adaptation of the commercial network to changes in the environment (Światowiec-Szczepańska, 2016).

Over the past three decades, extensive research in the interorganisational and business environment has shown that creating and maintaining relationships is crucial for doing business (Leszczyński, 2017; Szczepańska-Woszczyzna et al., 2015). The conditions for the formation and development of relationships are contextual. Contextual conditions are defined by the atmosphere, which can be described in terms of the strength and dependence of the relationship, the state of conflict or cooperation, the overall closeness or distance of the relationship, and the mutual expectations of the parties to the relationship. This leads to the conclusion that the atmosphere of the relationship becomes a key and main factor in the development of the relationship between companies and in shaping the characteristics of this relationship over time. One of the dimensions of the atmosphere of the relationship is strength, the consequence of which is the asymmetric nature of the relationship and the dependence of one of the parties on the partner (Zieliński, 2014). Strength in a relationship is the ability of one party to influence the performance of the other. It can take two forms: behavioural control, which consists in the possibility of influencing the behaviour of the other side, and fate control, which means making the outcomes of the other side of the exchange dependent on the behaviour of the first side (Anderson and Narus, 1990). Dependence on a given relationship depends on the level of alternative economic and social benefits that a given firm can derive from participating in another relationship, and on the barriers to breaking relationships that exist - external barriers, resulting from economic, legal or social factors, and internal barriers, resulting from the psychological costs of breaking the relationship.

In any interorganisational relationship, the balance of power and the degree of dependence or interdependence will shape the atmosphere of the exchange processes and the relationship itself. The sense of power or dependence is subjective and results from individual episodes. As organisations interact, their nature and outcome lead to the development of perceptions of the power of the entities in the relationship and the propensity to use it. The perceived level of power is important not because of its use, but because of the knowledge between the partners in the relationship that an asymmetry exists and can influence the actions of the party (Sutton-Brady, 2000). Anderson, Narus and Narayandas see strength as the ability

to influence a partner to take actions that it would not take under conditions of cooperation based on the principles of equilibrium (Anderson et al., 2008). The degree of strength between firms in a collaborative network is important because it indicates the extent to which they are dependent on or independent of other actors. Strength can be described in terms of the dependency and independence perceived by actors in relation to other entities within the network of firms, as well as in terms of the strength of the relationship (Henneberg et al., 2006). Power in interorganisational relationships can result from several factors, both positive: profitability of cooperation, obtaining exceptional benefits, and negative: no alternative, the amount of loss caused by the termination of the relationship (Ritter and Geersbro, 2012). Pfeffer and Salancik pointed out that firms adapt to the requirements of organisations that control the most important resources (Pfeffer and Salancik, 2003). The studies conducted so far indicate that in the interorganisational relationship, strength and dependence are not evenly distributed. The supplier is often weaker than its customer, and the customer is on the side of strength. As a result, suppliers adapt to customers more often and to a greater extent, while vice versa adaptations are rare. Given the extensive prior empirical support for alternative antecedents influencing strategy use, the explanatory power of supply chain contagion is impressive, suggesting that the way intermediaries treat end customers is largely explained by intermediaries simply imitating how their suppliers treat them (McFarland et al., 2008).

Power asymmetry is contingent upon the pattern of interactions within the network of relationships between companies (Hakansson and Waluszewski, 2013). Symmetry arises when there is a balance of opportunities and resources within the relationships (Hakansson and Snehota 1995). Achieving a balanced and symmetrical relationship with impact on resources and capacity requires both parties to actively strive for such equilibrium. While asymmetry can sometimes benefit both parties, it is not always the case in reality (Meehan and Wright, 2012), as power dynamics can shift based on the actions of buying or selling actors, thus presenting a highly dynamic nature (Lacoste and Johnsen, 2015). There are constraints on managing power due to its implications in interorganisational relations (Hakansson and Johanson, 1992; Johnsen and Ford, 2002). It has been noted that larger companies often dominate relationships with smaller ones, prioritizing cost reduction over the cultivation of commitment and trust (Johnsen and Ford, 2006). Central to fostering mutually beneficial relationships is the establishment of commitment and trust between companies (van Hoek, 2000). As commitment grows, varying levels of trust can be ascertained (Johnsen and Ford, 2006). Several factors, such as differing corporate cultures, interpretation of contractual expectations, weak actor ties, and personnel

changes, may pose threats to the development of commitment and trust. These factors can be instrumental in the IT sector, playing a crucial role in its sustainability and the formation of new relationships.

3.3. Specificity of ICT sector enterprises in Poland

A contemporary society and an efficiently functioning economy functions along constant development of innovative IT and telecommunications solutions. It is very difficult to list the sectors that do not use modern technologies or communications. ICT technologies are the basis of efficient logistics, form the basis of e-commerce, effectively combine with biology and molecular medicine, drive economies towards digitalisation, enable the development of the banking and financial sector, are a link between the offline and online worlds and blur the boundaries between them (Serova, 2017). Companies in the ICT sector contribute to the automation of production, the creation of the Internet of Things or the concept describing the technological and organisational transformation of companies called Industry 4.0. Modern technologies and solutions in the ICT sector made it possible to survive the Covid-19 pandemic for some businesses (Jasińska, 2020). Furthermore, modern information and communication technologies made it possible to reduce the negative effects of the lockdowns and, thanks to remote working, a number of organisations and companies were able to continue their activities (Jasińska, 2020; Yaqub and Alsabban, 2023).

Modern solutions in the ICT sector make it possible to estimate this market, the value of which, according to experts, will grow by up to several percent per year until 2029. Sectors based on blockchain technology and IT are growing and will grow by up to tens of per cent annually. According to optimistic scenarios, the value of the global ICT market globally, especially in services and software, will exceed three trillion dollars by 2029 (Polish Agency for Enterprise Development, 2023). The ICT sector is one of the most innovative economic sectors in Poland, and its strength is largely based on IT education and talented people, including outstanding and talented engineers. Every year, Polish programmers are placed at the top of numerous and influential rankings, and the very strong position of the Polish ICT sector is well established not only in European Union (EU) countries, where France, the Netherlands and Germany are dominant partners, but also outside the European Union (Polish Agency for Enterprise Development, 2023).

Table 14. Key importers of Polish ICT equipment from EU 27 in 2021 (in EUR billion)

Countries	Amount in EUR billion
Germany	EUR 3 billion
Netherlands	EUR 1.56 billion
France	EUR 0.76 billion
Sweden	EUR 0.69 billion
Italy	EUR 0.5 billion

Source: Polish Agency for Enterprise Development (2023, p. 33).

Among the countries of the European Union, the largest importers of ICT equipment to Poland are Germany, with a 25% share of total imports, which purchased products worth more than EUR 3 billion (Polish Agency for Enterprise Development, 2023). When compared all importers from the EU countries only, then Germany's share is even higher, as even 1/3 of the share gives our western neighbour the title of the leader and undisputed main partner (see Table 14). In addition, our western neighbour is also the largest importers of equipment and products such as tapes and discs for data recording, e.g. USB devices, RAM, discs and telecommunications equipment (Polish Agency for Enterprise Development, 2023)

The next country on the list of largest importers is the Netherlands, which is in the same position whether I analyse only the context of partners from the European Union or the entire world. The Netherlands imported the Polish ICT sector and related goods to the value of EUR 1.56 billion. The third place is occupied by France with import worth EUR 760 million in the category of sales of products from the ICT sector in Poland, the most frequently sold goods being discs for recording data, tapes for the same purpose and data processing equipment. Italy and Sweden followed with import worth EUR 690 million and EUR 500 million respectively. The top ten countries were Spain, Ireland, Denmark, Austria and the Czech Republic. Each year, Sweden increases the development of its cooperation and its imports from Poland rise noticeably (Polish Agency for Enterprise Development, 2023).

Table 15. Key importers of Polish ICT equipment outside the EU in 2021

Country	Amount in EUR billion
Great Britain	EUR 1.24 billion
Russia	EUR 0.43 billion

United States	EUR 0.23 billion
China	EUR 0.12 billion
Ukraine	EUR 0.09 billion

Source: Polish Agency for Enterprise Development (2023, p. 33).

After the Great Britain's exit from the EU in 2021, it has become the largest importer of Polish ICT equipment outside of the EU (Polish Agency for Enterprise Development, 2023), with import totalling EUR 1.24 billion (see Table 15). The Great Britain left behind both Russia and the United States, which imported EUR 0.43 billion and EUR 0.23 billion respectively. China imported half as much as the United States (EUR 0.12 billion). Ukraine came fifth with imports of EUR 0.09 billion (Polish Agency for Enterprise Development, 2023).

Table 16. Export of Polish equipment 2018-2021 (EUR billion)

Year	Export of Polish equipment
2017	EUR 8.7 billion
2018	EUR 9.2 billion
2019	EUR 9.9 billion
2020	EUR 10.7 billion
2021	EUR 11.8 billion

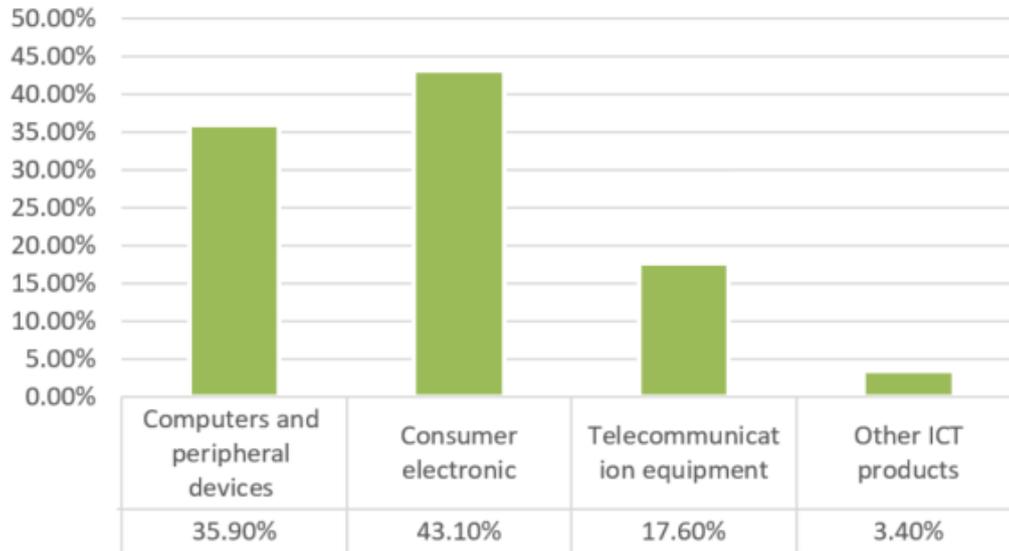
Source: Polish Agency for Enterprise Development (2023, p. 31).

Table 16 shows that the ICT sector in Poland is generating higher export every year and, according to the latest available data, the sector's revenues was the amount to PLN 212 billion in 2021.

The dominant products in the ICT sector, constituting nearly 80% of the total export value, are devices and machinery facilitating automatic data processing, as well as telecommunications equipment. Additionally, other exported categories include products and equipment for television and radio transmissions, video tuners, optical fibers, surge protectors,

data recording tapes/disks, electronic integrated circuits, circuit breakers, radio navigation and remote-control devices, as well as radars (Polish Agency for Enterprise Development, 2023).

Figure 11. The structure of Polish ICT products export in 2021



Source: own elaboration based on Polish Agency for Enterprise Development (2023, p. 32).

In Figure 11, it can be observed that consumer electronics accounted for over 43% of the exported products, while approximately 36% comprised appliances and computers. Additionally, 17.60% constituted telecommunication devices, with the remaining export products totalling around 3% (Polish Agency for Enterprise Development, 2023).

The changes visible in the society such as the shift from a product economy to a service economy and the emergence of the information society, have led to a rise in the usage of information-related services encompassing transmission, processing, and storage. Information and communication technologies (ICT) are now an integral part of modern society, playing a pivotal role across various domains. These changes, evident both in society and the economy, have a distinctly global nature. ICT is driving these changes and, concurrently, influencing the products and services on offer. Companies within the ICT sector demonstrate swift adaptation to the requisites of the information society, wherein the processing of information using ICT holds economic, social, and cultural significance.

The role of information and communication technologies (ICT) is integral to modern society. As per the definition provided in the report 'Prospects for the Development of the Polish ICT Industry by 2025, ICT encompasses technologies that gather, process, and transmit

information in electronic form. Information technology (IT) represents a more specific concept, referring to technologies related to software and computers, but not encompassing communication and network technologies. The advancement of enterprises in the ICT sector drives societal, economic, and civilizational progress, leading to the growth of activities associated with information and communication technologies within this sector. The ICT sector is widely recognized as one of the most innovative and plays a crucial role in enhancing the efficiency and operations of other economic sectors, despite being relatively young, it demonstrates rapid development (Polish Agency for Enterprise Development, 2017).

Enterprises within the ICT sector primarily focus on managing IT services within an organisation, with less emphasis on the creation of IT products and services. These organisations continuously strive to improve technology-based solutions to deliver optimal value to customers. Notably, customer satisfaction, understanding, and value creation have gained increasing significance.

Many sources refer to the ICT sector as a driving force for the development of the entire global economy (Jasińska, 2020). The development of the ICT sector has a positive impact not only on the global economy, but also on enterprises. The development of innovation and the increase in investment have a positive impact on the creation of intellectual capital and thus on the increase in the efficiency of companies. Many enterprises, known as digital leaders, achieve competitive advantages by adopting new technologies, which attracts potential investors. Despite the changing technological trends, the prospects for the development of the ICT sector seem undisturbed. Despite the changing technological trends, the prospects for the development of the ICT sector seem undisturbed, although the random situations that occur in the economy often raise questions about the relevance of the directions of development of this sector defined so far (Jasińska, 2020).

In 2021 and 2022, the total number of companies operating in the ICT sector in Poland is estimated to exceed 100,000. The data includes self-employed IT professionals providing B2B contracts. Most of them, 97.5%, represent companies that employ less than 10 people, only 2.5% employ 10 or more people. The beginnings of the Polish ICT sector date back to the late 1940s, but most of the companies were established after 1989, focusing mainly on software development, hardware production and communication technologies (Polish Agency for Enterprise Development, 2023).

The report - Information Society in Poland in 2022 (2022), indicates that in 2021 the number of companies operating in the ICT sector increased by 2.5% compared to 2020. Interestingly, also in 2022 the number of companies in the ICT sector increased by 7.2% compared to the previous year Information Society in Poland in 2023 (2023). ICT service companies were the main contributors to the overall year-on-year growth, with a 2.9% increase (comparing 2021 to 2020) and a 8.1% increase (comparing 2022 to 2021). Table 17 shows that, in 2021, service companies accounted for 91.1% of ICT businesses, with the largest number of them (78.8%) specialising in IT services. By contrast, the number of manufacturing enterprises decreased by 2.3% in 2022. Service enterprises accounted for 91.9% of ICT enterprises, and most of them (79.7%) specialised in IT services (Information Society in Poland, 2022).

Table 17. Number of enterprises in the ICT sector in Poland that employ 10 or more employees

Specification	Number of enterprises *				
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
ICT SECTOR (ICT production + ICT services)	2348	2393	2468	2530	2712
ICT production	238	222	226	224	219
ICT services	2110	2171	2242	2306	2493
ICT wholesale	251	251	267	255	268
telecommunications	260	235	239	234	238
IT services	1599	1685	1736	1817	1987

* Indicators for the ICT sector are presented for companies with 10 or more employees.

Source: own elaboration based on Statistics Poland (2022, p. 27) and Statistics Poland (2023, p. 27).

In recent years, the ICT sector in Poland has experienced a rapid surge in the emergence of technological startups and software houses. Many of these entities have achieved notable success in international collaboration, penetrating not only European but also global markets, including Japan and the United States. It is noteworthy that a significant portion, perhaps even exceeding half, of their revenues are derived from outside Poland. Additionally, there are large enterprises in Poland employing over 500 personnel that primarily focus on the domestic market. These industry giants, upon entering foreign markets, have demonstrated the ability to effectively compete with global brands. Interestingly, Europe's sole producer of computer memory is based in Poland, highlighting the diverse nature of the Polish ICT sector beyond

software development. This sector encompasses companies engaged in the production of physical products such as 3D printers, IoT beacons, robots, and memory devices, with the majority operating on a global scale (Polish Agency for Enterprise Development, 2023).

According to the Deloitte Technology Fast 50 report for 2022, 17 of the lists of 50 fastest growing technology companies from Central and Eastern Europe came from Poland, and even 4 out of these 17 companies were in the top ten. Another report presented by the Startup Poland Foundation anticipated 5,000 startups operating in Poland for 2022, and more than half of them in the B2B model. World rankings of technology companies, such as those published in the Financial Times, consistently list Polish companies among the fastest growing in the ICT sector (Polish Agency for Enterprise Development, 2023 – it comprises information’s from Startup Poland Foundation report). Table 18 shows Polish startups offer 2022 in ICT sector. It is worth noting that a start-up may have more than one product/service on offer.

Table 18. Polish startups’ offer 2022 in ICT sector

Type	Percentage of all startups
WEB applications	36%
Mobile applications	26%
Customized physical product	10%
Customized digital product	15%
Tools for IT	10%
Digital goods (games, videos, music, etc)	2%
Bulk physical products	9%
Hardware	17%
SaaS	39%
E-commerce services	13%
Consulting	15%

Source: Polish Agency for Enterprise Development (2023, p. 13).

Although research shows that most of the above-mentioned startups have a problem with concretisation in one business area, survey results usually show that the question about the essence of the activity is answered in a very general way, for example Big Data, MedTech, financial services (FinTech or Insurtech), HR tools, IT hardware, HR tech, productivity and management, analytics (research tools and business analytics), machine learning and artificial intelligence. It is worth noting that Polish startups are supported by the Polish state, and in 2022

they received funding worth USD 400 million (369 million EUR) (Polish Agency for Enterprise Development, 2023).

Polish companies operating in the ICT sector, as well as those from other sectors that are willing to use information and digital technologies, are becoming more competitive and can take advantage of new ways of growth and development. According to statistics in 2021, 3% of Polish companies implemented and regularly use AI solutions, one in five companies decided to use open databases, one third of Polish companies will conduct cybersecurity audits, and almost half of large Polish companies will use IoT (Internet of Things) devices and systems (Polish Agency for Enterprise Development, 2017). By 2021, 98% of Polish companies will have access to the Internet and use it regularly, and by 2022, 99% of companies used the Internet (see Figure 12). Interestingly, in 4/5 of Polish companies, employees already have mobile devices to use the internet remotely. In 2020-2022 the percentage of companies with access to broadband Internet (a worldwide computer network, which is a collection of millions of local networks and individual computers from all over the world, based on the TCP/IP communication protocol) across the country exceed 98% (Statistics Poland, 2022). A broadband connection is a type of connection characterised by a high speed of information flow, measured in Mb/s. Broadband connections are made possible by satellite links, cable networks or mobile telephony, among others. The value for large enterprises (with at least 250 employees) fluctuated around 100%, and such a high level of the indicator shows the ever-growing interest in the possibilities and benefits of connecting to the global network (Statistics Poland, 2022).

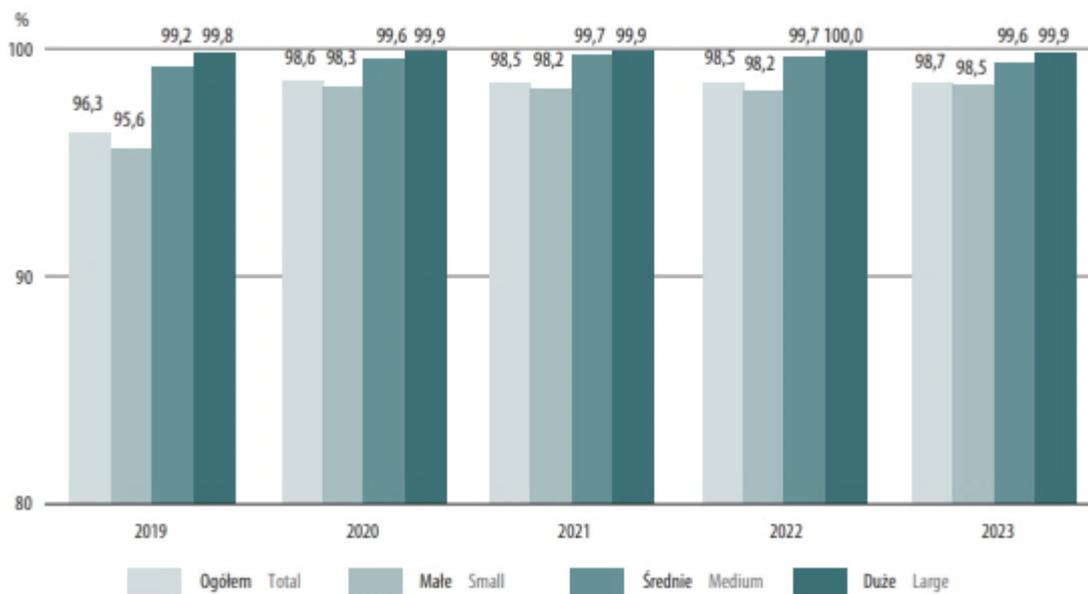


Figure 12. Enterprises with broadband access to the Internet by size classes

Source: Statistics Poland (2023, p. 73).

Figure 13 shows that in Poland in 2022 the Opole Voivodeship enjoys the highest percentage of enterprises with broadband Internet access (100%), and the lowest percentage of Łódź Voivodeship (97%).

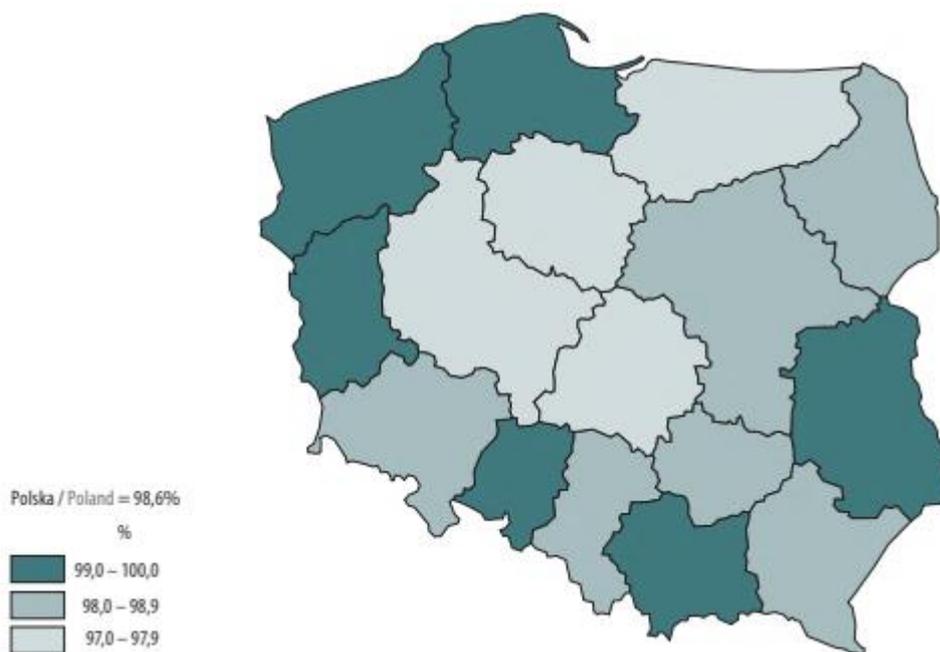


Figure 13. Enterprises with broadband access to the Internet in 2022

Source: Statistics Poland, Społeczeństwo informacyjne w Polsce w 2022 r. (2022, p.74).

In 2022, the share of enterprises that equipped employees with devices allowing access to the Internet from mobile devices amounted to 91.9%. Figure 14 shows that in 2023, the percentage of enterprises with broadband internet access was as high as 99%. The lowest rate of internet access was recorded in the Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodship (97.8%), while the highest rates were recorded in the Opolskie and Lubuskie Voivodships (99.6% and 99.5% respectively).

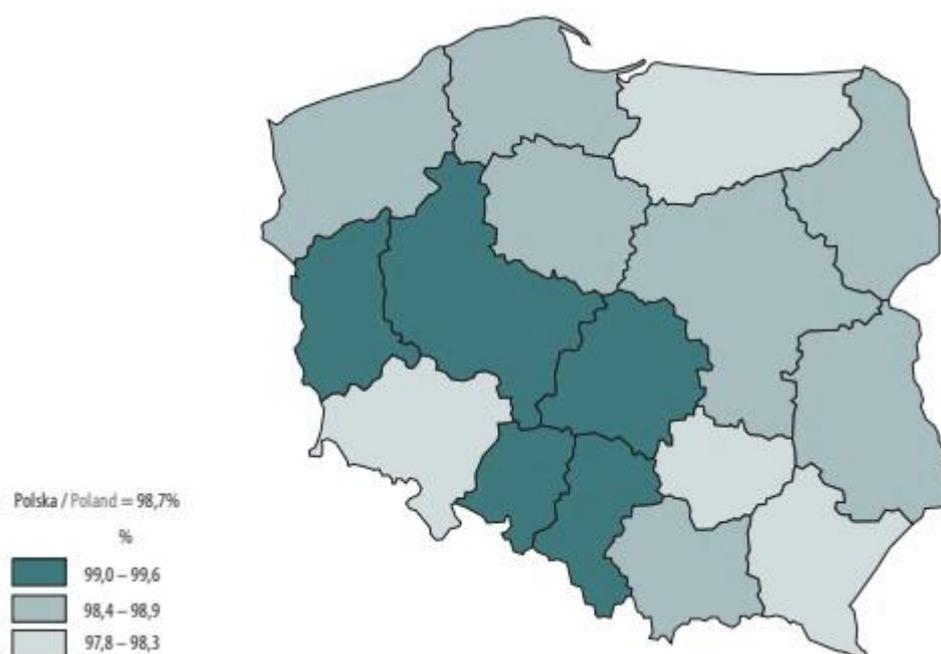


Figure 14. Enterprises with broadband access to the Internet in 2023

Source: Statistics Poland, Społeczeństwo informacyjne w Polsce w 2023 r. (2023, p.74).

From 2016 to 2023, the Polish ICT Support Programme was implementing in Poland with the financial support of the European Union, which will enable the annual support of excellent small and medium-sized start-ups and companies operating in Poland in this sector. There is no shortage of opportunities to promote companies in Poland and around the world, including stands organised by the Polish Agency for Enterprise Development (PARP), especially during international conferences and trade fairs (Polish Agency for Enterprise Development, 2017).

The undoubted advantages of using modern technology include both improved work efficiency and time savings. Moreover, digital solutions can help build or maintain relationships with stakeholders. As the above-mentioned statistics have shown, not all Polish enterprises make use of this potential. There is still a large disproportion in the diffusion of ICT solutions in Polish enterprises.

3.4. Characteristics of the mechanism of asymmetric relations between enterprises in the ICT sector in Poland

Since the last quarter of the 20th century, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) have played a significant role in the development of all economies around the world. Information and communication technologies, and with them the entire ICT sector, have changed the way people obtain the information they need, communicate with each other, work, manage their social lives or conduct business activities, and interact with government agencies (Roztockı et al., 2019; Saba et al, 2023). Numerous changes in the business environment, starting with the globalisation of markets, the shortening of product life cycles, as well as the increase in the pace of technological development (Lee et al., 2016), were the reason for the increased interest of organisations in various innovations in order to maintain their position in the changing business environment (Hogenhuis, et al., 2017).

Changes in the business environment and recent situations, including the Covid-19 pandemic, have had a very significant impact on the ICT sector, creating both new opportunities and threats. Some industries in the ICT sector have experienced significant declines in revenues, which have affected financial results, and many new niches with new opportunities have been created, thanks to which other industries have benefited greatly, for example through the introduction of large-scale remote working or digitisation in healthcare (Sierotowicz, 2022). When the borders were lifted as the pandemic began to subside, supply chains were restored and companies began to operate again, both remotely and in some cases bricks and mortar, so the need for ICT solutions was much greater than before the pandemic (Cagri et al., 2023).

Most enterprises cannot independently produce new technological products or introduce innovations due to the dispersion of both knowledge and resources (Möller and Svahn 2003). This is one of the reasons for interorganisational cooperation in innovation and technological

areas (Christensen et al., 2001). There is often a strong willingness to cooperate between large and small organisations due to different capabilities or characteristics, or access to complementary resources or the need for access to technological innovations.

Cooperation between small, knowledge-based firms and large firms with significant financial resources brings many benefits to both parties (Minshall, 2017). One of the benefits is access to financial resources, distribution channels, knowledge and, in the case of small firms, sometimes the only way to commercialise their technology (Boon and Faynshteyn, 2017). Moreover, it allows the use of knowledge, qualified personnel and the possibility to distribute technological products produced by small companies through the distribution networks of large companies. It is worth adding that interorganisational cooperation allows entering new markets, improving the culture of entrepreneurship and creativity in large companies, and allows small companies to increase credibility and brand development (Meng et al., 2021).

It should be noted that the process of interorganisational cooperation is very complex and its course can be influenced by many factors (Lis and Kotelska, 2023). Interorganisational cooperation is currently very complex because modern organisations not only facing the challenges but also actively shape their environment. The form of the resulting interorganisational relationships is influenced by the strategic resources of the organisation, such as knowledge (Penc-Pietrzak, 2016), as it is the basis for the existence, functioning and development of any organisation (Dolińska, 2010), individuals and communities (Dahlman, Anderson, 2000), as well as the entire global socio-economic system (Szczepańska-Woszczyzna et al., 2015; Szczepańska-Woszczyzna et al., 2021).

In Poland, new technologies and the ongoing digital transformation continue to permeate various aspects of socio-economic life (Mirzyńska, Szarucki and Kosch, 2021). The expanding ICT industry is vital for bolstering the country's global standing. Key trends in the ICT sector for 2023 encompass the advancing artificial intelligence (AI), the growth of the 5G network, and the acceleration of digital transformation in both the economy and administration. Overcoming challenges in cybersecurity and addressing the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as Russia's aggression against Ukraine, are paramount in the coming years. Due to the current social and economic situation, as well as the threats in Poland and the world, the ICT sector will play a key role.

Additionally, cloud solutions, entailing data storage in the cloud and the development of services catering to the needs of ICT companies and stakeholders in the sector, are regarded

as the future direction. In 2022 and 2023, the ICT sector in Poland faced many problems, mainly the problems related to the long-term effects of the pandemic due to the disruption of supply chains, as well as the rapidly increasing level of inflation in Poland (Polish Agency for Enterprise Development, 2023). From 2023, the main challenge in Poland is to build a secure economy, develop security and ICT systems, and invest in modern security, digital and green transformation, as well as public administration services and cybersecurity. Innovative solutions adopted by companies that are weakened by multiple crises may prove to be a particular type of competitive advantage over other companies. These issues have and will have an impact on the power asymmetry in the ICT sector in Poland.

3.5. Summary

The aim of this chapter was to answer the third additional research question (SRQ3): What are the methods and advantages to manage the power asymmetry in interorganisational relations and why is stakeholder relationships management important in the ICT sector? The answer relates to the scientific objective (SRO3) by explaining the methods and advantages of managing power asymmetry and stakeholder relationships management in companies from the ICT sector. In this chapter, I have used a systematic literature review as a research method.

The chapter has provided an overview of the fact that power asymmetry is a multifaceted and complex subject of research, and considerations of stakeholder theories in the context of asymmetry lead to interesting conclusions. Based on the analysis of the literature on the subject, it was found that companies compete for power by operating in the technology field, persuading stakeholders to adopt their technologies and combine with a common business model and try to manage this relationship. Such an approach allows the transfer of their technology to other users, which contributes to the creation of collaborative projects and new, shared technologies. Innovative solutions adopted by companies that are weakened by multiple crises may prove to be a particular type of competitive advantage over other companies. In this chapter I have described the methods and advantages to manage the power asymmetry in interorganisational relations and why is stakeholder relationships management important in the ICT sector. Therefore, the supporting objective undertaken in this chapter has been achieved.

Chapter 4

RESEARCH METHOD

4.1. Introduction

Knowledge plays a special role in strategic management, where the main problem is the reduction of uncertainty (Mesjasz and Szarucki, 2017), and making decisions is an integral part of every manager's job. During the decision-making process, managers encounter difficulties related to management issues (Szarucki, 2016a). Also, managers in the ICT sector face management difficulties, especially when managing companies with asymmetric relationships. Appropriate selection of methods in solving management problems is one of the factors increasing the efficiency of an organisation (Szarucki, 2016b).

The aim of this chapter is to answer the fourth additional research question (SRQ4) posed in this study: What are the ways to identify stakeholders of ICT companies and what are the assumptions of model building in interorganisational relations? Formulating an answer to the research question presented will achieve the fourth research objective (SRO4) of determining how to select stakeholder groups in the ICT sector and identify assumptions for model construction in interorganisational relations. The chapter will begin by describing the survey study design. Then, it will outline the methodological assumptions for building a model of power asymmetry and identifying the most important stakeholders in the ICT sector in Poland based on the Stakeholder Saliency Model.

4.2. Methodological approaches to study – sample selection

The Information and Communications Technology sector is the initiator and beneficiary of the digitization of all world economies. This is a unique sector because, on the one hand, it provides technological solutions that cause digitization, but on the other hand, it is developing as a result of developing digitization. The phenomenon of digitization and the growth of digital technologies and the very rapid flow of information change the behaviour of organisations and households, which implies the development of competitiveness and is an impulse for socio-

economic development (Olczyk and Kuc-Czarnecka, 2022). Decision-makers related to the ICT sector should take into account the variability of the environment of ICT sector enterprises as one of the key areas that should be given attention, along with identifying stakeholders and trying to maintain the best possible relationships with them (Olczyk and Kuc-Czarnecka, 2022).

For the purposes of further research, the definition of the ICT sector will be operationalised based on the PKD (Polska Klasyfikacja Działalności) classification of economic activities. The PKD classification of economic activities allows for grouping economic activities into sections, sub-sections, groups, and classes. The information and telecommunications sector include the following PKD sections and groups (Statistics Poland, 2023):

- 26.1- production of electronic components and printed circuits;
- 26.2- production of computers and peripheral devices;
- 26.3- production of equipment;
- 26.4- production of consumer electronic equipment;
- 26.8- production of magnetic and optical blank information carriers;
- 58.2- software publishing activities;
- 61- telecommunications;
- 62- activities related to software and IT consulting and related activities;
- 63.1- data processing; website management;
- 95.1- repair and maintenance of computers and communication equipment.

The classification of activities that are part of the ICT sector according to the Statistics Poland (Information Society in Poland in 2023 - report, 2023) is presented in Table 19.

Table 19. Areas of ICT activity according to the Polish Classification of Economic Activities

Section	Sub-section	Group
C – processing industry	26 - production of computers, electronic and optical products	26.1- production of electronic components and printed circuits
		26.2- production of computers and peripheral devices
		26.3- production of equipment
		26.4- production of consumer electronic equipment

		26.8- production of magnetic and optical blank information carriers
J – information and communication	58 - publishing activities	58.2- software publishing activities
	61- telecommunications	
	62- activities related to software and IT consulting and related activities	
	63- information service activities	63.1- data processing; website management
S – other service activities	95- repair and maintenance of computers and personal and household goods	95.1- repair and maintenance of computers and communication equipment

Source: own elaboration based on the PKD classification; Statistics Poland (2023, pp. 153 -1155).

The definition used in this work is slightly narrower than that of Statistics Poland, because it excludes enterprises engaged in activities related to ICT wholesale trade, PKD 46.51 and PKD 46.52, which the Statistics Poland classifies as a specific sector. According to the current definition, there are three basic segments of activity of enterprises in the ICT sector in Poland:

1. ICT production - enterprises classified according to the PKD classification as numbers 26.1-26.4 and 26.8.
2. Telecommunications - enterprises classified according to the PKD classification as number 61.
3. IT services - enterprises classified according to the PKD classification as numbers 58.2, 62, 63.1, 95.1.

The specific market of the ICT sector encourages the selection of different forms of stakeholder identification. The available literature clearly describes how stakeholders can be identified (Checchi, 2012). These methods are described in Table 20. The research results in my doctoral dissertation are presented in the three segments mentioned above, i.e. ICT production, telecommunications and IT services. In a situation where it is very difficult to obtain data in the above areas at the level of the PKD classification, and therefore in a situation where it is impossible to present the obtained information for the ICT sector according to the definition included in this work, the data will be available at the level of sections or sub-sections (Section J - Information and Communication).

The following criteria were adopted for selecting companies for the survey:

1. The main activities of enterprises can be classified according to the Polish Classification of Activities (PKD 2007):

- Division 26 of the PKD – production of computers, electronic and optical products
- Section 58 of the PKD – publishing activities
- Section 61 of the PKD – telecommunications activities
- Division 62 of the PKD – activities related to software and IT consulting and related activities
- Section 63 of the PKD – information service activities
- Division 95 of the PKD - repair and maintenance of computers and personal and household goods

2. The enterprise should employ 10 or more employees.

The second criterion is particularly important, as of 30 September 2023, there were 226944 active enterprises in the ICT sector in Poland, while there were only 1907 enterprises employing 10 or more people (Statistics Poland, 2023). The use of such criteria will allow me to exclude one-person enterprises, which are the most numerous in a given sector. These enterprises often are self-employed entrepreneurs, who offer services to a single company, instead of usual work agreement, and by this virtue their asymmetry management needs are limited.

Table 20. Methods and various forms of stakeholder identification

Author(s)	Steps
Colvin, Witt, and Lacey (2016)	Self-selection of stakeholders through the snowball method, the possibility of using the media and past experiences.
Reed and Curzon (2015)	Stakeholder research by creating a list of stakeholders using the snowball method, grouping stakeholders and analysing the relationships between them.
Aapaoja and Haapasalo (2014)	Determining stakeholders in the process of defining the project and determining its clients, determining stakeholder expectations and their classification.
Luyet et al. (2012)	Identification of stakeholders preceded by their characteristics and ended with the selection of the most important ones and their assessment.
Andre et al. (2012)	Initially, stakeholders should be identified, then their tasks, expectations and roles should be defined, which will allow for connecting stakeholders with influence on the interests of a given enterprise.
Poel and Kool (2009)	According to these researchers, after creating a stakeholder list, it is necessary to check its completeness to identify all people, groups or organisations.

Reed et al. (2009)	After establishing a list of stakeholders, the relationships between them are established and categorized into groups.
Archterkamp and Vos (2007)	The first stage involves establishing the company's goals and, as a result of brainstorming, the stages at which these stakeholders are involved are established.
Bailur (2006)	To manage stakeholders there is a need to identify them and understand their behaviour.
Bryson (2004)	Determining stakeholders involves identifying them, classifying them, defining their key expectations, analysing their impact on the company and classifying them according to their importance.

Source: own elaboration based on Makoza (2019, p. 47).

In this work, the method outlined by Reed and Curzon (2015) was initially used to identify stakeholders in the ICT sector (see Table 20). First, a list of several stakeholders was created, then pilot research was carried out to identify new categories of stakeholders. Due to the nature of stakeholder theory, which requires the establishment of appropriate relationships with stakeholders in order to satisfy their needs sequentially and in parallel, it has been necessary to adopt typologies that allow the assessment of the urgency and importance of contacts with a given stakeholder, regardless of what links them to the organisation. Corporate stakeholders are often referred to as strategic supporters of activities or strategic partners, because they are people or groups that have both a direct and indirect impact on the organisation's ability to achieve its goals. I also followed the suggestions of Obłój (1998) and Kafel (2000) to select the final group of stakeholders in the ICT sector. According to the researchers, in order for a person or group to be considered a stakeholder, it should meet two conditions, i.e. it should influence the company's decisions and the effects of its activities, and it should have an impact on the company's activities (Obłój, 1998). The characteristics of stakeholders should be as follows (Kafel, 2000):

1. the relationship between the partner and the company does not have to be balanced, but it should be mutual;
2. stakeholders have power over the company, they are necessary for its existence, because the company is dependent on them.
3. the stakeholder under the influence of the enterprise is connected to it and morally or legally dependent on it;
4. the objective of the enterprise-partner relationship is to strive for balance;

5. the company and the partner have a contractual relationship, and the level of dependence may vary over time.

6. The relationship between the company and the partner is based on certain expectations or demands, but the aim should be to strive for satisfaction.

Stakeholders from the closer environment are much easier to identify than stakeholders from the more distant environment, for several reasons, namely (Obłój, 1998):

1. in order for stakeholders from the broader environment to be noticed by the organisation, they need to unite into a larger group;

2. in order for stakeholders from the broader environment to be noticed by the organisation, they need to send a clear message;

3. stakeholders from the distant environment are only interested in sporadic situations or coincidences, which is why they are not always in the same groups. To identify stakeholders who appear sporadically in enterprises from the ICT sector, I analysed enterprises from the ICT sector, in the order presented in Figure 15.



Figure 15. Stakeholder analysis of enterprises from the ICT sector

Source: own study.

The implementation of the first stage in a given stakeholder analysis method is based on the identification of the stakeholders of companies in the ICT sector. In my work, this stage included the selection of stakeholders according to the methods indicated by Reed and Curzon (2015), Obłój (1998) and Kafel (2000).

Reed and Curzon's (2015) method for stakeholder selection in the ICT sector involves creating a list of stakeholders using the snowball method and then grouping them into two categories: internal and external stakeholders. This approach was found to be the most effective. The research identified the following groups of stakeholders in ICT companies (Reed and Curzon, 2015):

- Internal: Employees, Owners, Shareholders/Shareholders, Supervisory boards, Project manager, Members of the project team, Project portfolio manager and/or program manager, Project sponsor, Managers.
- External: Customers, Suppliers, Contractors, Subcontractors, Users, Investors, Competitors, State authorities, Financial institutions, Local institutions, Media and Trade Associations.

In order to identify stakeholders in the ICT sector through survey research, it was necessary to obtain answers to questions such as "Who has the most to lose in the event of failure of the organisation?", " If the organisation is successful, who has the most to lose? ". In an environment based on a high degree of variability, such as that in which ICT companies operate, decisions about stakeholder selection are best made through experience and intuition.

The second stage involved data entry and modification to check the validity of the data entered. The third stage involved determining the importance in the hierarchy of the stakeholders selected in the second stage and ended with commissioning survey research on a group of 200 companies in the ICT sector (see Appendix 1). Based on the above, I was able to select a group of stakeholders in the ICT sector, which is presented in Figure 16.

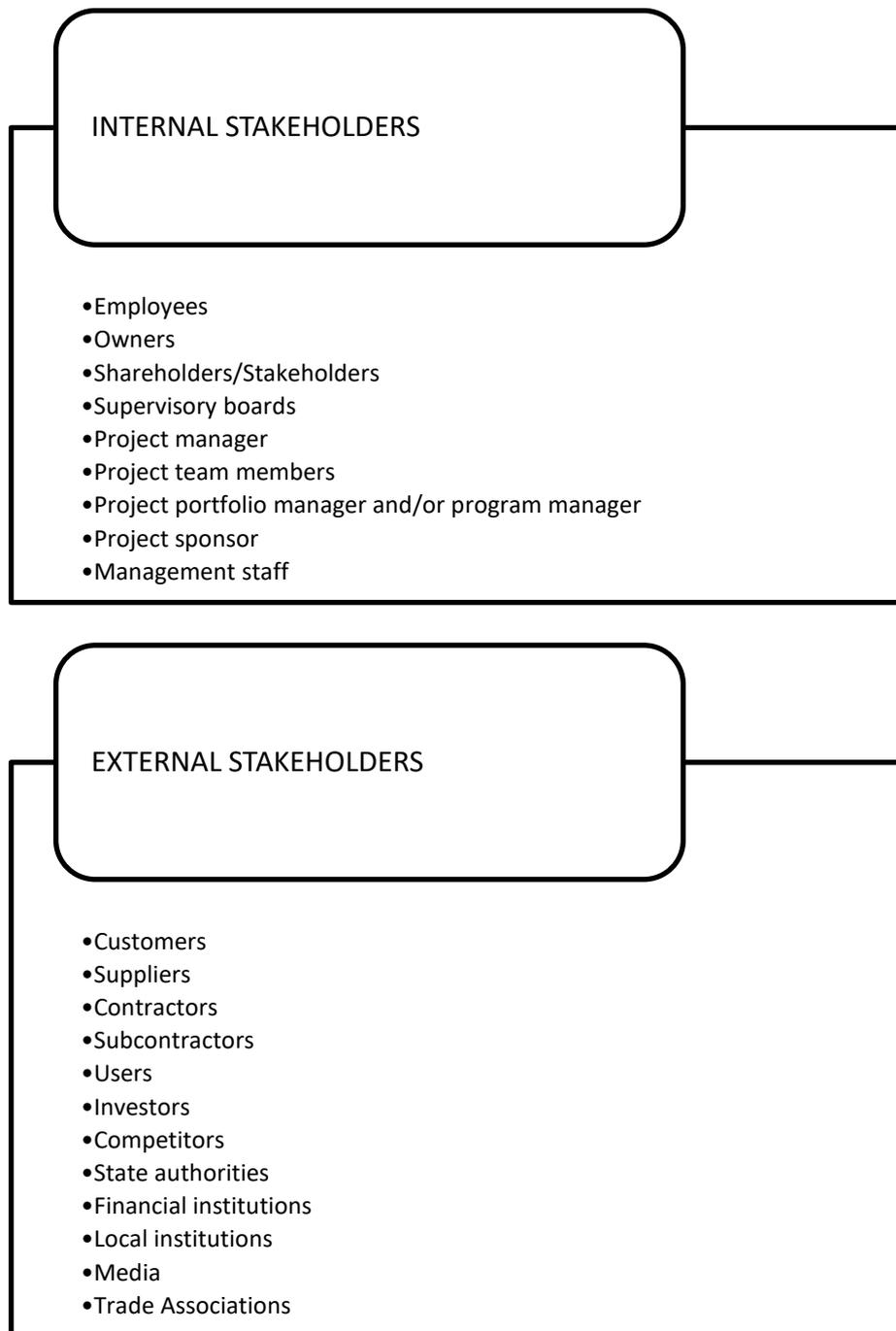


Figure 16. Stakeholders of ICT sector enterprises

Source: own study.

The last three stages, shown in Figure 15 and marked in green, will be carried out and presented in Chapter 5 of this dissertation, in which I will analyse the results of the survey, but the methodological assumptions will be presented below. In the next stages, in accordance with the assumptions that stakeholders are located in certain spheres in the environment of companies in the ICT sector and that each of them has a specific scope of interest in the

company, each stakeholder receives a number from -5 to 5, which indicates its strength of influence, and the lower the score, the lower the stakeholder's interest and strength of influence for a given company.

Another important point is shown in Figure 17, the stakeholder matrix study by Johnson, Scholes and Whittington (1999), which allows stakeholders to be divided into four groups. The first group includes key stakeholders for the organisation, who have a huge impact on the way the company operates and are very interested in the company; the next group includes stakeholders who are interested but do not have a major influence. The next two groups are stakeholders who are not interested in the organisation's situation and have a very large influence on the company, and the last group are stakeholders who have a minimal influence on the company and are not interested in the organisation's situation.

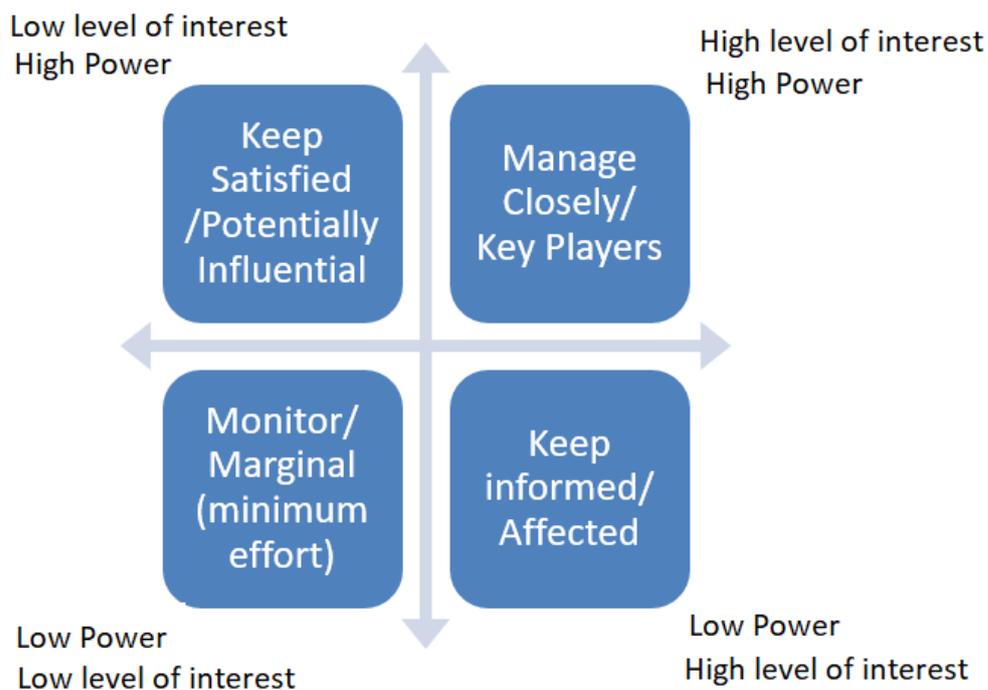


Figure 17. Stakeholder matrix by G. Johnson and K. Scholes

Source: Johnson, Scholes and Whittington (1999, p. 156).

This grouping will allow me to identify those stakeholders who are key and whose needs and wishes the organisation should adapt to. Stakeholders who have the greatest influence on the company and are most interested in the company's activities are the strategic group in the

hierarchy of importance. Next, the following sequence of actions should be carried out (Lisiński, 2004):

1. define the stakeholders in the matrix of links between them;
2. enter the strategic partners of the company in the undirected matrix of links;
3. determine the nature and relations of one partner to the other partners of the company.

The influence of one partner on the other is then marked with the sign (+), while the dependence of one partner on the other is marked with the sign (-). A score is then given from 0 to 7, indicating the strength of the influence between the stakeholders, where 0 means that there is no connection, while 7 means full strength of influence. The final step is the summation of all values in the columns and rows of the matrix, which makes it possible to identify the strongest dependencies between stakeholders.

The sum of the values in the columns of the matrix indicates the strength of a partner's dependence on other partners, while the sum of the numbers in the rows indicates the strength of a partner's influence in each network of organisations surrounding that organisation. The nature of the links and relationships can be both bilateral and unilateral, as the links are not only symmetrical, but can also be asymmetrical.

The above analysis is valuable for its ability to identify interactions, but in order to qualitatively determine interactions between stakeholders, it is worth conducting an additional key stakeholder analysis based on determining the fundamental factors of the relationship between key stakeholders. According to M. Lisiński (2004), the basic factors are:

1. willingness and ability to create interest groups;
2. willingness and ability to use legal solutions;
3. willingness and ability to use media;
4. willingness and ability to use political pressure;
5. willingness and ability to establish shared objectives between partners and the organisation.

The mentioned above procedures for selecting stakeholders will help me to identify, diagnose and manage the power asymmetry in interorganisational relations, which would allow the synthesis of the extensive literature and the synthesis of the existing research on the power asymmetry in interorganisational relations. This results in the following research gap: there is no research on the identification, diagnosis and management of power asymmetry in

interorganisational relations in the ICT sector in Poland. Some research has provided evidence that ideal or complete power symmetry in interorganisational and business relations is rather abstract. On the other hand, research also provided evidence that once such an adequate set of power asymmetry dimensions is found, it remains in the relationship for a longer period of time. In other words, power asymmetry is not so ephemeral, so it can be treated as a manageable business factor (Siemieniako et al., 2022).

The subject of the research was the diagnosis of processes related to the management of power asymmetry in interorganisational relations in the ICT sector in Poland. The research was conducted among owners and managers of small, medium and large companies engaged in business activities. The size of the research sample is 200 companies. The research was conducted in the period from 15.10.2023 to 15.11.2023. The structure of the research sample included variables such as: gender, type of position held in the enterprise and length of service, as well as variables related to enterprises such as: annual profit, expenditure on R&D, geographical scope of services provided, number of employees, origin of capital or duration of activity. This study included a heterogeneous sample of 200 enterprises in the ICT sector and respondents from them: owners, partners, board members, managing directors, managers or employees.

The selection of the sample of 200 enterprises was carried out using a non-random sampling method, i.e. snowball sampling. This method allows the selection to be based on reaching a small group of respondents and then, through them, other individuals known to them with similar characteristics. In this way, the number of units in the sample is increased until the assumed sample size is reached. Such techniques, which do not use random sampling procedures but other procedures, are based on known objective data and are primarily the result of subjective decisions made possible by knowledge of the structure of the population under study (Martínez-Mesa et al., 2016).

Among the practical methods for determining the sample size and the most popular forms of empirical data analysis, there is an approach based on the expected detail of the cross-classification. When determining the sample size, one should primarily consider issues related to the territorial scope of a given study, the type of entities participating in the study and the number of segments analysed (Bazarnik et al., 1992). In the Polish ICT sector in 2023 there will be 2500 companies with ten or more employees (Statistics Poland, 2022). Due to the number of companies in this sector and the sensitivity of the data, it was decided that the appropriate research sample would be 200 companies.

4.3. Survey study design

When choosing methods for studying economic units (both companies and research units), researchers can draw on experience in the field of market research. There are a number of classifications of research methods in this area, one of which includes the following division (Jasiński, 1999):

- questionnaire surveys,
- panel studies,
- motivational research,
- experimental research,
- observational studies.

After getting acquainted with the above-mentioned methods and a more detailed analysis, I came to the conclusion that in the research project I am planning to carry out, it will be justified to conduct questionnaire research (see Appendix 1). The questionnaire consists of 44 questions and is divided into 3 parts. The first part, consisting of 9 questions, related to the stakeholder survey questions. In this part of the questionnaire, respondents answered questions relating to the influence of stakeholders on their company. Questions ranged from identifying the stakeholders with the strongest and weakest influence, stakeholders with and without an interest in the company's operations and success, stakeholders to which the company aligns its activities, to selecting the company's most important external stakeholder. The second part of the questionnaire, consisting of 23 questions, examines the relationship with the most important key external stakeholder. It consists of questions about initiating new cooperation, continuing cooperation, the situation regarding the influence of stakeholders on the company in terms of e.g. changes in initial objectives, benefits obtained as a result of negotiations, adapting to the other party, termination of cooperation, duration of cooperation, sharing of know-how and responsibility for failure of cooperation. The third part of the questionnaire, consisting of 13 questions is demographic information. It concerns the description of the enterprises participating in the survey. The questions relate to the sector in which the enterprise is active (PKD), the number of employees, the length of time the enterprise has been operating on the market, the origin of the capital, the legal form of the activity, the form of ownership and the

type of activity, the annual turnover and the position in the enterprise. In this survey data has been collected and prepared by a professional analytical company.

In choosing this method, I was guided by the specificity of the sample and the difficulties in reaching the respondents (company directors, managers, etc. of companies operating in the ICT sector). These are hard to reach people who do not have the time and are not very willing to participate in the study. Given the subject of the study and the characteristics of the respondents, the technique of Computer Assisted Telephone Interviews (CATI) seems to be the most appropriate.

This technique is characterised by the use of an electronically stored questionnaire to complete the survey and is particularly common in customer and employee satisfaction surveys in the private and public sectors. The advantages of this technique include quality, as both the interviewer and the respondent have constant access to the data, which allows for ongoing quality control; an additional advantage is the possibility of completing a given questionnaire from a selected device with Internet access and at a convenient time. Such surveys can also be accompanied by audio-visual aids or graphic materials.

According to the available literature, it is worthwhile to use the repertoire grid technique, which makes it possible to obtain constructs that are appropriate for a given study, often conducted on a small sample (Botterill and Crompton, 1996; Tan and Hunter, 2002). This approach can be useful for the subsequent development of research tools adapted to larger groups of respondents, such as survey questionnaires (Tan and Hunter, 2002). A general scheme of the research methods adopted, including the empirical part of the work, is shown in Figure 18.

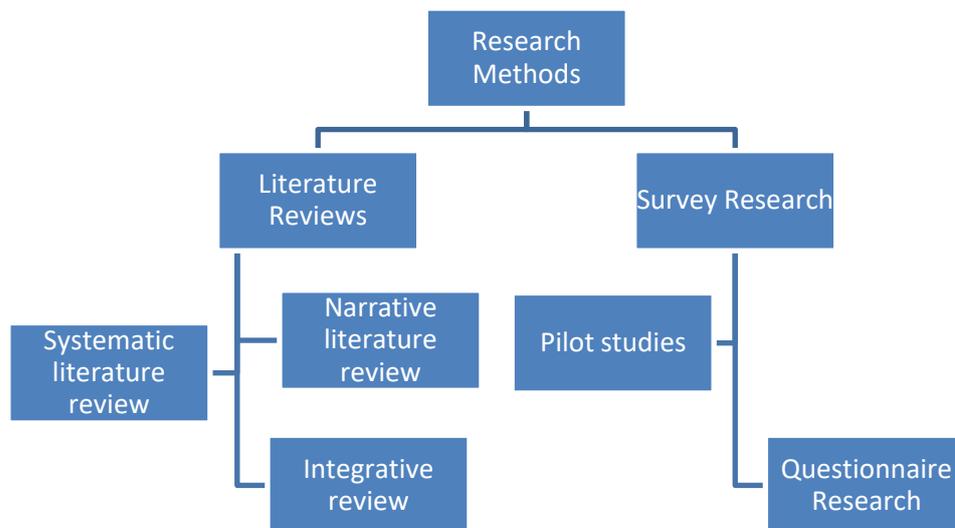


Figure 18. Research methods

Source: own study.

The method of pilot study I used in the process of collecting primary data. The study was conducted with over 20 managers of enterprises from the ICT sector. Pilot testing helped me to examine the validity of each question and a pilot study was conducted to ascertain initial insights into the Polish ICT sector and formulate pertinent research questions for the dissertation.

Pilot tests allowed me to evaluate the questionnaire I had created. All inaccuracies and problems were identified before the full survey was carried out. The questionnaire should meet both the objectives and the tasks of the study, and thanks to the use of a pilot study, it was possible to obtain information on the average time taken by respondents to answer each question. The main advantages of using a pilot method are to ensure that respondents understand the questions included in the questionnaire and to highlight questions that do not provide the required information.

The survey research for the purposes of this dissertation was conducted in the period from 15.10.2023 to 15.11.2023 in Polish language. It was an anonymous survey. The main research idea was to analyse companies from the ICT sector in Poland in order to examine the occurrence of power asymmetry in the relationships between these companies. Importantly, to the best of my knowledge, no one in Poland has dealt with this issue in a specific sector, therefore the research aimed to fill this research gap.

4.4. Methodological assumptions for building a model of power asymmetry in the ICT sector in Poland

Identifying the state of power asymmetry and building a model of the existing state of power asymmetry in interorganisational relations in the ICT sector in Poland is one of the scientific objectives of my dissertation. It is reported in the literature that researchers often start building a model, without specifying its methodological assumptions (Szarucki, 2011). Specifying methodological assumptions not only provides some rules (Sułkowski, 2016), but also identifies the requirements that must be met in order to build the model (Światowiec-Szczepańska, 2020). In this doctoral dissertation, in accordance with the understanding of J. Bugaj and M. Szarucki, I assume that methodological assumptions can take the form of an arrangement of successive phases of modelling, along with specific tasks performed in the course of each phase (Bugaj and Szarucki, 2017). The word model is considered to be ambiguous, which is reflected in numerous definitions.

Modelling has a variety of meanings, namely it can be understood in a narrow and a broad sense. In the narrow sense, it means the creation of a model (Szarucki, 2016a), while in the broad sense, it is a methodological concept that contributes to the solution of problems by means of the models used (Kosch, 2022).

In management and quality sciences, the creation of models plays an important role in solving various types of problems (Szarucki, 2016a). In this work, the modelling method is used to achieve the scientific goal of building a model for managing power asymmetry in interorganisational relations in the ICT sector. The basis for the proper conduct of scientific research is the ability to use appropriate scientific methods (Kosch, 2022). The scientific method plays an extremely important role in the process of creating any science, including management and quality sciences, to which a given work belongs (Lisiński and Szarucki, 2020).

According to M. Lisiński and M. Szarucki, the scientific method is an instrument for the construction of science, by means of which assertions are formulated and used, constituting a system of logically and factually ordered assertions, related to each other by specific logical relations, occurring in a given science and meeting the internally accepted criteria of scientific and methodological correctness (Lisiński and Szarucki, 2020). In the literature, it is stated that the problem may determine the use of selected methods in a given study (Pieter, 1967). The cognitive value of the scientific methods used consists of various criteria depending on the scientific paradigm adopted in a given study (Sułkowski, 2015). Researchers also emphasise that the application of measures can contribute to the development of science (Lisiński and Szarucki, 2020). New and original methods of scientific cognition are often underestimated in science. As Sudoł (2017) points out, these methods can make a significant contribution to science.

The variety and number of definitions of the word model are caused by its ambiguity, because it refers to words such as method, description, analogue, structure, scheme, theory and abstraction (Sztoff, 1971). Etymologically, the word model means an image or representation (Szarucki, 2011). However, in the literature there is a list of three basic meanings of the term model (Martyniak, 1973):

- model as theory,
- model as a guiding pattern, concept, primal form;
- model as a simplified, secondary representation.

In the first context, the model is considered as a theory, which is often criticised by researchers, including in the work of Sztoff and Zieleniewski (1972) (Szarucki, 2011). In the second context, the model is treated as a pattern, i.e. an object that is reproduced. In the third context, the model is seen as a representation of reality.

In the literature one often encounters information, the mapping model has a cognitive function (Martyniak, 1973). Researchers often question whether the model should be complex and accurate, or whether it should be simple and approximate (Szarucki and Malinski, 2008). In order to answer this question, it is necessary to know the objective that the model should achieve. For example, the purpose of the study may be to learn the meaning and facilitate the understanding of the characteristics of a phenomenon. With such an objective, the model should be as simple as possible to be used and studied (Findeisen, 1985).

Research in management sciences is accompanied by models, including theoretical and conceptual, research and statistical models (Zakrzewska-Bielawska, 2018). Models can therefore play a role in the social sciences, especially in the discipline of management and quality sciences, because they are helpful in conducting research on organisations that are always in motion. In the social sciences, including management, a model is a means of schematisation that allows the simplification or idealisation of the subject being studied. In the available literature in the field of management sciences, models are mostly considered as exceptional cases of theory or mapping (Szarucki, 2011). The reality of entrepreneurs' work is rarely a linear function, so it is very difficult to talk about axioms here due to too many variables. According to Falencikowski, a model is a system that operates analogously to an enterprise and is distinguished by a certain degree of simplification, which does not disturb the functioning analogy (Falencikowski, 2013). Often, only the use of certain simplifications allows researchers to achieve the goal related to the construction of the model (Gajda, 2017). The remaining model definitions are presented in Table 21.

Table 21. Model definitions found in the management sciences literature

Source	Model definition
Zieleniewski (1976)	A model is a theory constructed in such a way that the variables included in it can be manipulated operationally.
Nowak (1985)	A description of an object (phenomenon, class of phenomena, etc.) in terms of certain components and relationships between them, or a system of couplings and relationships between the properties of this object, which meets the requirement of adequacy of the object under study.
Schiffman, Kanuk and Hansen (2008)	The representation of reality in a simplified way, showing at the same time the relations that occur between the various elements of a certain system after its analysis.
Sułkowska and Sułkowski (2011)	A model is a set of methods and techniques for measuring, comparing and classifying a problem.
Falencikowski (2013)	A model is a generalised system that works by analogy, but because of this generalisation it has certain generalisations and simplifications that do not interfere with this analogy.
Smyczek (2013)	The model is not just a passing fad, it represents actual behaviour.
Gordon (1974; cited by Mielczarek, 2009)	A model defined as a collection of information about a system, gathered for the purpose of studying it.
Krick (1971; cited by Szarucki, 2011)	A model allows researchers to describe the character or behaviour of a particular original. The description (mapping) can be done with words, numbers, symbols, diagrams, charts, or by presenting objects that behave or look like the original.
Liptak (cited by Szarucki, 2011)	A model is a simplified representation of an object, phenomenon or process, whether real or imagined, existing in reality or only in our imagination, that corresponds to that object in terms of its basic properties.
Majminas (cited by Szarucki, 2011)	A model is a representation of certain characteristics of an object in order to study it.

Sztoff (1971 cited by Szarucki, 2011).	A model is a measurable or materially realisable system. A model reflects or reproduces the object of study and can substitute for it, thus providing researchers with new information about the object as a result of the study.
Ackoff (1969 cited by Szarucki, 2011).	Models allow the representation of states, objects or events. Their simplicity compared to reality is due to the fact that models only take into account those properties of reality that are relevant in a given case.

Source: own elaboration based on: Szarucki (2011, pp. 268-269), Kosch (2022, p. 131), Bratnicki (1983, p. 47), Ackoff (1969, p. 142), Janulek (2022, p. 43).⁴

To identify relationships between variables, a method such as morphological analysis can be very helpful, which assumes the operationalization of the model as an entity containing two elements that can serve as variables (Kosch, 2022). In Poland, in the field of management and quality sciences, the morphological method was studied by Kosch (2022), Kozina (2017), and Trocki and Wyrozębski (2014). This method was created and popularized by F. Zwicky in 1939. As a method, morphological analysis in its updated version allows the construction of models from discrete variables, where the connections between them are undirected and impossible to quantify and, at the same time, cyclical and do not constitute causal relationships. Discrete variables in this case mean that morphological modeling builds its solutions primarily on concepts, partial solutions generally having a verbal description. (Kosch, 2022, pp. 156-157). This model is particularly important in the context of a given work, because it allows you to build a model despite the lack of specific cause-and-effect relationships in each relationship between the organisation and the key stakeholder.

Morphological analysis should be carried out in the following sequence (Ritchey, 2018, p. 86):

1. analysis phase - defining the problem and parameters and identifying possible parameter levels;
2. synthesis phase - identifying the relationship between parameters and their levels and carrying out a symmetrical examination of the coherence of the morphological space.

In the modernized version of the morphological method, the result is not a single solution, but a model of various possible solutions (see Figure 19).

⁴ Other sources cited after the Authors.

p_{r1}	p_{r2}	p_{r3}
p_{r11}	p_{r21}	p_{r31}
p_{r12}	p_{r22}	p_{r32}
p_{r13}	p_{r23}	p_{r33}
p_{r14}	p_{r24}	p_{r34}
p_{r15}	p_{r25}	p_{r35}
p_{r16}	p_{r26}	p_{r36}
p_{r17}	p_{r27}	

Explanation: p_{rij} – level j of the parameter and i solution.

Figure 19. An example of a one-sided morphological model

Source: Kosch (2022, p. 159) based on Ritchey (2018).

To summarise the above analysis of the concept of a model for the purposes of this work, a model will be understood as a mapping model with morphological model shape, as a method such as morphological analysis will be very valuable in the context of this work. It will be used in this sense in the course of further discussion. I will adopt the definition of a mapping model given by Majminas (see Table 21), who sees a model as a representation of certain characteristics of an object in order to study the modelled object. A model as a mapping is most often used to study the facts of an object or its behaviour with the management of interorganisational relationships (Babiak et al., 2017). When creating a model for a specific work, it is important to consider the limitations that may arise from the particular situation in which a solution is sought. In this case, it is necessary to take into account the conditions required for its application.

4.5. Identification the most important stakeholders in the ICT sector in Poland based on the Stakeholder Salience Model

Proper identification of the most important stakeholder groups and cooperation with representatives of individual stakeholder groups will allow not only to obtain ready-made ideas or develop joint solutions to problems, but also to build a positive image of the company among stakeholders or even improve the image of the entire sector (Styk and Bogacz, 2022). In order to select the most important stakeholders, companies can analyse:

1. the strength of influence of a given stakeholder on the enterprise;
2. the legitimacy of the relationship between the company and the stakeholder;
3. which stakeholder group has the most urgent claims to make (Mitchell et al. 1997, pp. 853-854).

Narrow definitions of stakeholders, which specify what conditions should be met for a particular group to be recognised as a stakeholder (Mitchell et al. 1997), refer more to the reality that managers or owners cannot define all possible stakeholders because in practice they may influence or be influenced by the organisation (Freeman, 1984). Stakeholders may have claims on the organisation and the organisation may have claims on stakeholders in legal, financial or moral terms. In addition, they consider aspects of legitimacy or power over the stakeholder or the stakeholder over the organisation, but Mitchell et al. (1997, p. 864) found that "urgency, the degree to which stakeholder claims demand immediate attention" is also very important. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, researchers Mitchell et al. (1997, p. 864) indicated that mainly three variables are important in stakeholder identification:

1. Power - allowing the ability to influence the company;
2. Legitimacy - assumption of desirable actions;
3. Urgency - an assumption that allows stakeholders to be ranked.

The above typology of stakeholders, given by Mitchell et al. (1997), which takes into account the observations of managers, is here adopted while building a model for managing power asymmetry in the ICT sector.

Determining the importance of each stakeholder in the ICT sector will allow me to select the most important stakeholders because they are the ones who drive the asymmetry in interorganisational relations. In determining the power of a particular stakeholder group in the ICT sector, I will refer to the definition of legitimacy, which determines certain features and

characteristics of a particular organisation as a result of the influence of the external environment on it (Suddaby et al., 2017). Therefore, it can be argued that legitimacy is gained by meeting the expectations of external stakeholders and responding to their attributes (Suddaby et al., 2017; Riandita, 2020). I will understand salience as "the degree to which stakeholder claims demand immediate attention" (Mitchell et al., 1997, p. 867). This will allow me to select stakeholders with as many of the above attributes as possible, and to assess the criticality of a given relationship and the weight of the claims.

I will select salience stakeholders in the ICT sector, the definition according to Mitchell et al. as "the degree to which managers give priority to competing stakeholder claims" (Mitchell et al., 1997, p. 854). The work of any organisation is judged through the prism of the values it promotes to its stakeholders, because any organisation is constantly in the sphere of interest of different people and groups. Although it would be more beneficial to meet the expectations of all stakeholders, this is not possible in practice because of conflicts between different stakeholders (Rybak, 2004) or asymmetries resulting from, among other things, the information available (Mesjasz, 2000). As the relationships between organisations depend, among other things, on the different interests of stakeholders, because certain groups or units are directly related to the functioning of the organisation, it is very important to analyse the relationships between stakeholders from the point of view of reducing asymmetry and the possibility of managing it through stakeholder relationships management.

Latent stakeholders include dormant stakeholders, demanding stakeholders and discretionary stakeholders (Mitchell et al., 1997). This group has an attribute of low salience, and managers may not be interested in their needs at all or may not treat them as stakeholders. Expectant Stakeholders include Dangerous Stakeholders, Dependent Stakeholders and Dominant Stakeholders (Mitchell et al., 1997). They always have two attributes and are of medium importance to managers, sometimes managers do not meet their expectations. Definitive stakeholders always have all three attributes and are very important to the organisation, managers always focus on meeting the expectations of this group and give priority only to these stakeholders (Khurram et al., 2019). The most important feature of Stakeholder Salience is that the attributes are not always objective, as they are based on human perception and stakeholders are not always aware of the characteristics they have or do not want to use these characteristics. Therefore, this model is considered to be dynamic, as are the activities of an organisation in a dynamic environment. The activities of an organisation cannot be considered without taking into account its relationship with the environment, which largely

determines its success or failure. Because every organisation is an open system that enters into numerous, multidimensional and dynamic interactions with the environment, which include cooperation, competition, collaboration, exchange of material and non-material resources, including energy, information and money (Matejun and Nowicki, 2013).

4.6. Summary

The fourth additional research question (SRQ4) to which the answer was sought in this chapter was: What are the ways to identify stakeholders of ICT companies and what are the assumptions of model building in interorganisational relations? The answer was related to a secondary objective (SRO4) to determine how to select stakeholder groups in the ICT sector and identify assumptions for model construction in interorganisational relations.

The overarching aim of this chapter was to describe the methods of conducting survey study, and resulted in sample selection on a group of 200 companies from the ICT sector in Poland (see Appendix 1). In addition, the assumptions for the construction of the model were described and it was specified that the model in this work will be treated as a mapping model with morphological model shape. This chapter also specifies the methodology for selecting stakeholders in the ICT sector (using Stakeholder Salience model) and identifying the assumptions for building a model of interorganisational relations, so the specific objective can be considered achieved.

Chapter 5

FINDINGS OF OWN SURVEY STUDY

5.1. Introduction

In this chapter the efforts are focused to answer the fifth additional research question (SRQ5) posed in this study: Is there a power asymmetry in the interorganisational relations in the companies of the ICT sector in Poland? The answer to this research question will allow the achievement of the additional scientific objective (SRO5), which is identification the state of power asymmetry in ICT companies in Poland based on survey data analysis.

This chapter is an empirical analysis. It starts with the methodological assumptions of the research and the characteristics of the respondents covered by the study. It also presents the results of statistical analyses and challenges related to the management of companies in the ICT sector in Poland. The issues discussed are considered in the context of the importance of specific actors in a given sector. This chapter's summary will present the findings on whether there is a power asymmetry in the interorganisational relations between ICT sector enterprises in Poland.

5.2. Participants of the survey research

In order to conduct the research, I developed a research procedure, which included the purpose, subject and object of the research, main and detailed research problems, research questions and research methods and techniques. The main purpose of the research was to identify the state of power asymmetry and attempt to build a model of power asymmetry management in interorganisational relations in the ICT sector in Poland.

As a result, 200 companies with ten or more employees participated in the 2023 survey. The answers to the metric questions of the questionnaire survey are presented together with the metric in the form of frequency tables. The results are given as absolute numbers and percentages with N=200. In the case of multiple choice questions, the basis for the percentages was always N=200. The analysis is descriptive and exploratory. Numbers were compared using

the chi-squared test of concordance in a one-tailed comparison, without considering pairwise comparisons or corrections for multiple comparisons. A significance level of $\alpha=0.05$ was used.

Table 22. Division to which the predominant activity can be classified according to the scheme of the Polish Classification of Activities (PKD 2007)

Polish Classification of Activities - PKD	N	%
Division 26 of PKD - Production of computers, electronic and optical products	43	21.5%
Division 58 of the PKD - Publishing.	19	9.5%
Division 61 of the PKD - Telecommunications.	22	11.0%
Division 62 of the PKD - software and IT consultancy and related activities	77	38.5%
Division 63 of the PKD - information services.	27	13.5%
Division 95 PKD - Repair and maintenance of computers and personal and household goods	12	6.0%
Total	200	100.0%

Source: own study.

Table 22 shows that companies categorised according to PKD are represented with different frequencies. The differences in the number of individual divisions are statistically significant: χ^2 (df =5, N=200)=84.88, $p < 0.001$. 38.0%, N=77 represents software and IT consulting and related activities, 21.5%, N=43 - production of computers, electronic and optical products, 13.5%, N=27 - information services, 11.0%, N=22 - telecommunications, 9.5%, N=19 publishing, 6.0%, N=12 - repair and maintenance of computers and personal and household goods.

Table 23. Number of persons employed in the company

Number of persons employed in your company	N	%
10 - 49 employees	94	47.0%
50 - 249 employees	67	33.5%
250 - 999 employees	23	11.5%
1,000 or more employees	16	8.0%
Total	200	100.0%

Source: own study.

Companies differ significantly in terms of employment: χ^2 (df =3, N=200)=82.2, $p < 0.001$, companies with 50-249 employees (SMEs) prevail - 47.0%, N=94. A trend is noticeable - the larger the company, the smaller the representation (see Table 23).

Table 24. Years in business

Please indicate how many years your company has been in business?	N	%
1-2 years	6	3.0%
3-5 years	34	17.0%
6-9 years	59	29.5%
10-20 years	56	28.0%
21 years and older	45	22.5%
Total	200	100.0%

Source: own study.

Table 24 shows that the time intervals of operation in the market differ significantly in terms of numbers: Companies differ significantly in terms of employment: χ^2 (df =4, N=200)=45.85, $p < 0.001$, the youngest companies account for 3%, N=6, slightly older ones operating in the market for 3 to 5 years account for 17.0%, N=6. The percentages of companies with longer tenure are similar, at levels exceeding 20%.

Table 25. Origin of company's capital

What is the origin of your company's capital?	N	%
100% Polish capital	81	40.5%
50% or more, but less than 100% of Polish capital	69	34.5%
Less than 50% Polish capital	40	20.0%
0% Polish capital	10	5.0%
Total	200	100.0%

Source: own study.

Companies differ in the number of entries for each type of capital: χ^2 (df =3, N=200)=60.44, $p < 0.001$, companies with all Polish capital, 40.5%, N=81, and more than half Polish capital, 34.5%, N=69, predominate. Companies based entirely on foreign capital make up only 5%, N=10, of the surveyed collective (see Table 25).

Table 26. Legal status of companies

What is the legal status of your company?	N	%
Joint-stock company	20	10.0%
Private Limited company	80	40.0%
Limited partnership	17	8.5%
General Partnership	32	16.0%
Partnership	20	10.0%
State-owned enterprise	6	3.0%
Other form...	25	12.5%
Total	200	100.0%

Source: own study.

Table 26 shows the numbers of the different categories of legal forms of companies differ significantly: χ^2 (df =6, N=200)=121.09, $p < 0.001$, 40.0%, N=80 are Private Limited companies, 16.0%, N=32 are general partnerships. Other legal forms represent a negligible percentage. A sole proprietorship was listed among other legal forms.

Table 27. Type of ownership

What type of ownership is your company?	N	%
Joint-stock company	191	95.5%
Limited liability company	9	4.5%
Total	200	100.0%

Source: own study.

The vast majority of ownership forms- 95.5%, N=191- are Joint-Stock Companies; χ^2 (df =1, N=200) =165.62, $p < 0.001$ (see Table 27).

Table 28. The nature of your company's operations

What is the nature of your company's operations?	N	%
Operating 100% under its own brand name	131	65.5%
Business 100% on behalf of customers selling under someone else's brand name	61	30.5%
Mixed activity under own and someone else's brand name	8	4.0%
Total	200	100.0%

Source: own study.

Table 28 shows the majority-65.55, N=131-of the companies surveyed: χ^2 (df =2, N=200)=114.19, $p < 0.001$, have their own commercial brand. In the case of mixed business, the following proportions of own brand to foreign brand were indicated:

- 70% to 30% and 50% to 50% with two responses each.
- 60% to 40%, 30% to 70%, 20% to 80% after one answer.

Table 29. Conducting research and development activities

Does your company conduct research and development activities?	N	%
Yes	68	34.0%
No	86	43.0%
It is difficult to say	46	23.0%
Total	200	100.0%

Source: own study.

Table 29 shows that relatively most enterprises-43.0%, N=86-do not conduct R&D activities; χ^2 (df=2 N=200)=12.04, $p=0.002$.

Table 30. The geographic coverage of company's product/service presence

What is the geographic coverage of your company's product/service presence?	N	%
Local (county and possibly surrounding counties)	16	8.0%
Regional (territory of the entire province)	55	27.5%
Nationwide (nationwide coverage)	80	40.0%
International (at least one country outside Poland)	49	24.5%
Total	200	100.0%

Source: own study.

Companies are mostly national in scope - 40.0%, N=80, regional - 27.5, N=55 or international - 24.5%, N=49, local companies account for a few percent. χ^2 (df =3, N=200)=41.64, $p < 0.001$ (see Table 30).

Table 31. The annual revenue

What is the annual revenue of your company?	N	%
51 - 200 thousand PLN	49	24.5%

201 thousand zlotys - 1 million PLN	61	30.5%
1 - 5 million PLN	46	23.0%
5 - 20 million PLN	29	14.5%
Above 20 million PLN	15	7.5%
Total	200	100.0%

Source: own study.

Table 31 shows that companies vary in terms of annual revenues, with only 7.5%, N=15 having revenues of more than 20 million PLN. The majority of revenues are in the range of 51 thousand - 5 million PLN: χ^2 (df=4, N=200)=32.6, $p < 0.001$.

Table 32. Position in the company

Position	Indication		No indication		chi-square	Relevance
	N	%	N	%		
Owner	22	11.00%	178	89.0%	22	<0.001
Partner	18	9.00%	182	91.0%	18	<0.001
Board Member	37	18.50%	163	81.5%	37	<0.001
Managing Director	23	11.50%	177	88.5%	23	<0.001
Manager	51	25.50%	149	74.5%	51	<0.001
Managerial employee in the ICT sector	57	28.50%	143	71.5%	57	<0.001

Source: own study.

Table 32 shows that the number of indications of individual jobs is significantly lower than no indication χ^2 (df=5;N=208)=11.07; $p < 0.001$. No job outweighs the others, 26 respondents. The vast majority of respondents mentioned one job (N=192), eight are employed in two jobs, no one mentioned three jobs. A relatively high percentage of respondents - 28.50% (N=57) - are employed in the ICT sector in the position of manager, slightly less - 25.50%, N=51 - in the position of executive. The smallest group consists of employees - 9.00% (N=22).

Table 33. Length of employment in the company

How long have you worked for the company?	N	%
0-2 years	34	17.0%
3-5 years	69	34.5%
6-9 years	43	21.5%
10 years and over	54	27.0%
Total	200	100.0%

Source: own study.

Relatively most respondents have seniority in the company range of 3-5 years, respondents with less seniority are the least numerous group 17.0%, N=34: χ^2 (df=3, N=200)=13.64, p= 0.003 (see Table 33).

Table 34. Gender of the respondents

Gender	N	%
Female	58	29.0%
Male	140	70.0%
Total	198	100%
Other	2	
Total	200	

Source: own study.

The vast majority of respondents were male: 70.0%, N=140; χ^2 (df =1, N=198)=3.84, p < 0.001. Two respondents of unspecified gender were omitted from the comparison. The survey sample of companies is diverse in all characteristics, and this also applies to the respondents themselves (see Table 34).

Table 35. Summary of the characteristics of the surveyed population, N=200.

Question		Comparison of numbers - chi-square test
Question 32	Please indicate in which division the main activity of your company can be classified according to the Polish Classification of Economic Activities (PKD 2007)?	χ^2 (df =5, N=200)=84.88, p <0.001
Question 33	Number of people employed in your company	χ^2 (df =3, N=200)=82.2, p <0.001
Question 34	Please indicate how many years your company has been in business?	χ^2 (df =4, N=200)=45.85, p <0.001
Question 35	What is the origin of your company's capital?	χ^2 (df =3, N=200)=60.44, p <0.001
Question 36	What is the legal form of your company?	χ^2 (df =6, N=200)=121.09, p <0.001
Question 37	What is the form of ownership of your company?	χ^2 (df =1, N=200)=165.62, p <0.001
Question 38	What is the nature of your company's operations?	χ^2 (df =2, N=200)=114.19, p <0.001
Question 39	Does your company conduct research and development activities?	χ^2 (df =2 N=200)=12.04, p=0.002
Question 40	What is the geographic coverage of your company's product/service presence?	χ^2 (df =3, N=200)=41.64, p <0.001

Question 41	What is the annual revenue of your company?	χ^2 (df=4, N=200)=32.6, p <0.001
Question 42	How long have you worked for the company?	χ^2 (df=3, N=200)=13.64, p= 0.003
Question 43	Gender	χ^2 (df=1, N=198*)=3.84, p < 0.001

Source: own study.

The survey included representatives of 200 companies in the ICT sector, the summary of the characteristics of the surveyed population is presented in Table 35. The highest percentage are managers in the ICT sector and managers with at least 3 years' seniority in a given enterprise, mostly men. In the surveyed set of enterprises, the most represented are enterprises engaged in software and consulting activities in the field of information technology and related activities (Section 62 of the PKD), from the ICT sector, operating on the market for at least 6 years, in which Polish capital represents at least more than 50% of all shares. The legal form of a typical company is a limited liability company or a general partnership, the form of ownership is mostly a joint-stock company, the companies usually have their own brand name, do not carry out research and development activities, have a wider than local, mostly national scope and revenues in the range of 51,000 PLN - 5 million PLN.

5.3. Survey data analysis – stakeholder study

This subsection presents the survey responses to all survey questions. The analysis is both exploratory and descriptive. Results are presented as absolute numbers and percentages with N=200. As in the previous subsection, in the case of multiple choice questions, the basis for the percentages was always N=200. The figures were compared using the chi-squared test of concordance in a one-tailed comparison, without considering pairwise comparisons or adjustments for multiple comparisons. A significance level of $\alpha=0.05$ was used.

Table 36. Internal stakeholders in a position to influence the organisation's actions and decisions, according to respondents

Internal entities	Indication		No indication		chi-square	Relevance
	N	%	N	%		
Employees	78	39.00%	122	61.0%	9.68	0.002
Owners	56	28.00%	144	72.0%	38.72	<0,001
Shareholders	95	47.50%	105	52.5%	0.5	0.48

Supervisory boards	19	9.50%	181	90.5%	131.22	<0,001
Project Manager	35	17.50%	165	82.5%	84.5	<0,001
Project team members	21	10.50%	179	89.5%	124.82	<0,001
Project portfolio manager and/or program manager	15	7.50%	185	92.5%	144.5	<0,001
Project Sponsor	20	10.00%	180	90.0%	128	<0,001
Executives	64	32.00%	136	68.0%	25.92	<0,001

Source: own study.

In each case, the percentages of indicated entities were significantly lower than the no-choice option. Only in the case of shareholders is the difference between the number of reported and unreported entities not statistically significant, meaning that a similar number of respondents reported this type of internal entity as capable of influencing the company. At the same time, this option was relatively the most frequently selected by respondents - 47.5%, N=95. The next most frequently mentioned type of entity was the employee - 39.0%, N=78, followed by the manager - 32.0%, N=64 (see Table 36). The project manager appeared least frequently - 7.5%, N=15, while less than 20 references were made to supervisory boards - 9.5%, N=19; these two entities have little influence on the actions and decisions of the entrepreneur. The number of references to each type of internal body able to influence the entrepreneur's actions and decisions differs significantly: χ^2 (df=8;N=403)=15.51; p<0.001.

Table 37. External stakeholders capable of influencing actions and decisions on the organisation according to respondents

External entities	Indication		No indication		chi-square	Relevance
	N	%	N	%		
Customers	61	30.5%	139	69.5%	30.42	<0.001
Suppliers	34	17.0%	166	83.0%	87.12	<0.001
Contractors	29	14.5%	171	85.5%	100.82	<0.001
Subcontractors	3	1.5%	197	98.5%	188.18	<0.001
Users	31	15.5%	169	84.5%	95.22	<0.001
Investors	27	13.5%	173	86.5%	106.58	<0.001
Competitors	5	2.5%	195	97.5%	180.5	<0.001
State authorities	16	8.0%	184	92.0%	141.12	<0.001
Financial institutions	13	6.5%	187	93.5%	151.38	<0.001

Local institutions	4	2.0%	196	98.0%	184.32	<0.001
Media	5	2.5%	195	97.5%	180.5	<0.001
Trade unions	8	4.0%	192	96.0%	169.28	<0.001

Source: own study.

By far the highest percentage of external entities capable of influencing a company's operations are customers - 30.5%, N=61, followed by suppliers - 17.0%, N=34, who account for almost half (55.7%) of the customer group. Only slightly fewer indications - 15.50%, N=31 was gathered by users, followed by contractors - 14.5%, N=29, similarly, investors - 13.5%, N=27. Subcontractors are by far the least represented - 1.5%, N=3, followed by local institutions - 2.0%, N=4, and then media and competitors - 2.5% each, N=5. The numbers of indications of each type of external entities capable of influencing the company's activities and decisions differ significantly: χ^2 (df=12;N=420)=21.03; p<0.001 (see Table 37).

Table 38. Internal stakeholders that can have a strong influence on the organisation according to respondents

Internal entities	Indication		No indication		chi-square	Relevance
	N	%	N	%		
Employees	47	23.5%	153	76.5%	56.18	<0.001
Owners	52	26.0%	148	74.0%	46.08	<0.001
Shareholders	84	42.0%	116	58.0%	5.12	0.024
Supervisory boards	19	9.5%	181	90.5%	131.22	<0.001
Project Manager	35	17.5%	165	82.5%	84.5	<0.001
Project team members	17	8.5%	183	91.5%	137.78	<0.001
Project portfolio manager and/or program manager	20	10.0%	180	90.0%	128	<0.001
Project Sponsor	24	12.0%	176	88.0%	115.52	<0.001
Executives	45	22.5%	155	77.5%	60.5	<0.001

Source: own study.

Table 38 shows that relatively the highest number of indications - 42.0%, N=84, was given by shareholders, a group that a significant proportion of respondents consider to have a strong influence on the company. Owners come next with 26.0%, N=52, followed by employees with 23.5%, N=47, and executives with 22.5%, N=45. The influence of other entities is noticeably weaker, with project team members being the least important with 8.5%, N=17. The

numbers of indications of each type of internal entity capable of strongly influencing the activities and decisions of the enterprise differ significantly: $\chi^2(df=8;N=343)=83.11$; $p<0.001$.

Table 39. External stakeholders that can have a strong influence on the organisation according to respondents

External entities	Indication		No indication		chi-square	Relevance
	N	%	N	%		
Customers	33	16.5%	167	83.5%	89.78	<0.001
Suppliers	11	5.5%	189	94.5%	158.42	<0.001
Contractors	9	4.5%	191	95.5%	165.62	<0.001
Subcontractors	3	1.5%	197	98.5%	188.18	<0.001
Users	6	3.0%	194	97.0%	176.72	<0.001
Investors	30	15.0%	170	85.0%	98	<0.001
Competitors	5	2.5%	195	97.5%	180.5	<0.001
State authorities	11	5.5%	189	94.5%	158.42	<0.001
Financial institutions	13	6.5%	187	93.5%	151.38	<0.001
Local institutions	3	1.5%	197	98.5%	188.18	<0.001
Media	3	1.50%	197	98.5%	188.18	<0.001
Trade unions	4	2.0%	196	98.0%	184.32	<0.001

Source: own study.

Table 39 shows that the most important group of external stakeholders are customers, but only 16.5% of the respondents, N=33. The number of mentions for each type of external actor capable of strongly influencing the company's activities and decisions differs significantly: $\chi^2(df=12;N=131)=10.08$; $p<0.001$.

Table 40. Internal stakeholders with little influence on the organisation according to respondents

Internal entities	Indication		No indication		chi-square	Relevance
	N	%	N	%		
Employees	59	29.5%	141	70.5%	33.62	<0.001
Owners	7	3.5%	193	96.5%	172.98	<0.001
Shareholders	34	17.0%	166	83.0%	87.12	<0.001
Supervisory boards	8	4.0%	192	96.0%	169.28	<0.001
Project Manager	18	9.0%	182	91.0%	134.48	<0.001
Project team members	20	10.0%	180	90.0%	128.00	<0.001

Project portfolio manager and/or program manager	16	8.0%	184	92.0%	141.12	<0.001
Project Sponsor	6	3.0%	194	97.0%	176.72	<0.001
Executives	9	4.5%	191	95.5%	165.62	<0.001

Source: own study.

When listing the groups with the least influence on the enterprise, respondents relatively often pointed to employees; 29.5%, N=59. The numbers of indications of each type of internal actors with little influence on the activities and decisions of the enterprise differ significantly: $\chi^2(df=8;N=177)=19.67$; $p<0.001$ (see Table 40).

Table 41. External stakeholders with little influence on the organisation according to respondents

External entities	Indication		No indication		chi-square	Relevance
	N	%	N	%		
Customers	31	15.5%	169	84.5%	95.22	<0.001
Suppliers	56	28.0%	144	72.0%	38.72	<0.001
Contractors	28	14.0%	172	86.0%	103.68	<0.001
Subcontractors	23	11.5%	177	88.5%	118.58	<0.001
Users	25	12.5%	175	87.5%	112.50	<0.001
Investors	8	4.0%	192	96.0%	169.28	<0.001
Competitors	16	8.0%	184	92.0%	141.12	<0.001
State authorities	7	3.5%	193	96.5%	172.98	<0.001
Financial institutions	10	5.0%	190	95.0%	162.00	<0.001
Local institutions	17	8.5%	183	91.5%	137.78	<0.001
Media	23	11.5%	177	88.5%	118.58	<0.001
Trade unions	10	5.0%	190	95.0%	162.00	<0.001

Source: own study.

Table 41 presents that the most frequently mentioned weak entity is the supplier - 28.0%, N=56. Other categories of responses received less than 10% of the responses. The number of mentions of each type of external entity with little influence on the company's activities and decisions differs significantly: $\chi^2(df=8;N=254)=19.54$; $p<0.001$.

Table 42. Internal stakeholders with interest in the operation/success of the organisation according to respondents

Internal entities	Indication	No indication		Relevance
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	N	%	N	%	chi-square	
Employees	74	37.0%	126	63.0%	13.52	<0.001
Owners	47	23.5%	153	76.5%	56.18	<0.001
Shareholders	103	51.5%	97	48.5%	0.18	0.670
Supervisory boards	22	11.0%	178	89.0%	121.68	<0.001
Project Manager	42	21.0%	158	79.0%	67.28	<0.001
Project team members	29	14.5%	171	85.5%	100.82	<0.001
Project portfolio manager and/or program manager	19	9.5%	181	90.5%	131.22	<0.001
Project Sponsor	24	12.0%	176	88.0%	115.52	<0.001
Executives	52	26.0%	148	74.0%	46.08	<0.001

Source: own study.

According to the majority of respondents - 51.5%, N=103 - shareholders have a vested interest in the success of the company. This was followed by employees (37.0%, N=74), although they received significantly fewer indications. More than 20% of indications each went to owners, managers and project managers. Number of indications for each type of internal stakeholder interested in the operation/success of the company $\chi^2(df=8;N=412)=45.78$; $p<0.001$ (see Table 42).

Table 43. External stakeholders with interest in the operation/success of the organisation according to respondents

External entities	Indication		No indication		chi-square	Relevance
	N	%	N	%		
Customers	26	13.0%	174	87.0%	109.52	<0.001
Suppliers	23	11.5%	177	88.5%	118.58	<0.001
Contractors	17	8.5%	183	91.5%	137.78	<0.001
Subcontractors	7	3.5%	193	96.5%	172.98	<0.001
Users	10	5.0%	190	95.0%	162.00	<0.001
Investors	28	14.0%	172	86.0%	103.68	<0.001
Competitors	6	3.0%	194	97.0%	176.72	<0.001
State authorities	7	3.5%	193	96.5%	172.98	<0.001
Financial institutions	5	2.5%	195	97.5%	180.50	<0.001
Local institutions	7	3.5%	193	96.5%	172.98	<0.001
Media	7	3.5%	193	96.5%	172.98	<0.001

Trade unions	5	2.5%	195	97.5%	180.50	<0.001
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Source: own study.

Frequent indications were investors - 14.0%, N=28 and customers - 13.0%, N=26. Trade unions received the fewest indications - 2.5%, N=5. Numbers of indications of each type of external entities interested in the operation/success of the enterprise $\chi^2(df=12;N=418)=11.38$; $p<0.001$ (see Table 43).

Table 44. Internal stakeholders not interested in the operation/success of the organisation according to respondents

Internal entities	Indication		No indication		chi-square	Relevance
	N	%	N	%		
Employees	37	18.5%	163	81.5%	79.38	<0.001
Owners	15	7.5%	185	92.5%	144.5	<0.001
Shareholders	21	10.5%	179	89.5%	124.82	<0.001
Supervisory boards	9	4.5%	191	95.5%	165.62	<0.001
Project Manager	20	10.0%	180	90.0%	128	<0.001
Project team members	10	5.0%	190	95.0%	162	<0.001
Project portfolio manager and/or program manager	17	8.5%	183	91.5%	137.78	<0.001
Project Sponsor	10	5.0%	190	95.0%	162	<0.001
Executives	8	4.0%	192	96.0%	169.28	<0.001

Source: own study.

Table 44 presents that no internal entity was singled out, which is clearly most often indicated as uninterested in the success of the company, relatively often - 18.5%, (N=37) employees are mentioned. Numbers of indications of each type of internal entity not interested in the operation/success of the company $\chi^2(df=8;N=147)=16.33$; $p<0.001$.

Table 45. External stakeholders not interested in the operation/success of the organisation according to respondents

External entities	Indication		No indication		chi-square	Relevance
	N	%	N	%		
Customers	17	8.5%	183	91.5%	137.78	<0.001
Suppliers	16	8.0%	184	92.0%	141.12	<0.001
Contractors	7	3.5%	193	96.5%	172.98	<0.001
Subcontractors	8	4.0%	192	96.0%	169.28	<0.001

Users	4	2.0%	196	98.0%	184.32	<0.001
Investors	5	2.5%	195	97.5%	180.5	<0.001
Competitors	83	41.5%	117	58.5%	5.78	0.016
State authorities	12	6.0%	188	94.0%	154.88	<0.001
Financial institutions	6	3.0%	194	97.0%	176.72	<0.001
Local institutions	14	7.0%	186	93.0%	147.92	<0.001
Media	16	8.0%	184	92.0%	141.12	<0.001
Trade unions	9	4.5%	191	95.5%	165.62	<0.001

Source: own study.

Approximately 41.5%, N=83 respondents, indicated that competitors are not interested in the success of the enterprise, the other categories of stakeholders each received a few percent of the responses. Number of indications of each type of external stakeholder not interested in the company's operation/success $\chi^2(df=12;N=197)=15.15$; $p<0.001$ (see Table 45).

Table 46. Internal stakeholders with positive attitude to the organisation according to respondents

Internal entities	Indication		No indication		chi-square	Relevance
	N	%	N	%		
Employees	83	41.5%	117	58.5%	5.78	0.016
Owners	48	24.0%	152	76.0%	54.08	<0.001
Shareholders	92	46.0%	108	54.0%	1.28	0.258
Supervisory boards	18	9.0%	182	91.0%	134.48	<0.001
Project Manager	35	17.5%	165	82.5%	84.50	<0.001
Project team members	30	15.0%	170	85.0%	98.00	<0.001
Project portfolio manager and/or program manager	24	12.0%	176	88.0%	115.52	<0.001
Project Sponsor	25	12.5%	175	87.5%	112.50	<0.001
Executives	45	22.5%	155	77.5%	60.50	<0.001

Source: own study.

Approximately 46.0% (N=92) of those surveyed said that shareholders held a positive view of the company, followed by employees (41.5%, N=83). Owners were ranked third, 24.0%, N=48. The numbers of indications of each type of internal entity is positively oriented toward the enterprise $\chi^2(df=8;N=400)=15.51$; $p<0.001$ (see Table 46).

Table 47. External stakeholders with positive attitude to the organisation according to respondents

External entities	Indication		No indication		chi-square	Relevance
	N	%	N	%		
Customers	65	32.5%	135	67.5%	24.5	<0.001
Suppliers	61	30.5%	139	69.5%	30.42	<0.001
Contractors	31	15.5%	169	84.5%	95.22	<0.001
Subcontractors	15	7.5%	185	92.5%	144.5	<0.001
Users	24	12.0%	176	88.0%	115.52	<0.001
Investors	27	13.5%	173	86.5%	106.58	<0.001
Competitors	3	1.5%	197	98.5%	188.18	<0.001
State authorities	7	3.5%	193	96.5%	172.98	<0.001
Financial institutions	4	2.0%	196	98.0%	184.32	<0.001
Local institutions	6	3.0%	194	97.0%	176.72	<0.001
Media	2	1.0%	198	99.0%	192.08	<0.001
Trade unions	1	0.5%	199	99.5%	196.02	<0.001

Source: own study.

Table 47 shows that 32.5%, N=65 of the respondents identified customers as external entities that are favourable to the company. This was followed by suppliers with 30.5%, N=61. Trade unions were mentioned only once. Number of mentions of each type of external entity that is favourable to the company $\chi^2(df=12;N=246)=18.92$; $p<0.001$.

Table 48. Internal stakeholders with a negative attitude towards the organisation according to respondents

Internal entities	Indication		No indication		chi-square	Relevance
	N	%	N	%		
Employees	27	13.5%	173	86.5%	106.58	<0.001
Owners	15	7.5%	185	92.5%	144.5	<0.001
Shareholders	20	10.0%	180	90.0%	128	<0.001
Supervisory boards	10	5.0%	190	95.0%	162	<0.001
Project Manager	12	6.0%	188	94.0%	154.88	<0.001
Project team members	11	5.5%	189	94.5%	158.42	<0.001
Project portfolio manager and/or program manager	9	4.5%	191	95.5%	165.62	<0.001
Project Sponsor	13	6.5%	187	93.5%	151.38	<0.001

Executives	6	3.0%	194	97.0%	176.72	<0.001
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Source: own study.

Based on the survey 13.5%, N=27 respondents identified employees as having a negative attitude towards the company, 10.0%, N=20 mentioned supervisory boards. The other categories of stakeholders gained few indications each. Numbers of indications of each type of internal stakeholder, is negatively oriented towards the enterprise $\chi^2(df=8;N=123)=13.67$; $p<0.001$ (see Table 48).

Table 49. External stakeholders with a negative view of the organisation according to respondents

External entities	Indication		No indication		chi-square	Relevance
	N	%	N	%		
Customers	12	6.0%	188	94.0%	154.88	<0.001
Suppliers	6	3.0%	194	97.0%	176.72	<0.001
Contractors	8	4.0%	192	96.0%	169.28	<0.001
Subcontractors	6	3.0%	194	97.0%	176.72	<0.001
Users	2	1.0%	198	99.0%	192.08	<0.001
Investors ⁵	4	2.0%	196	98.0%	184.32	<0.001
Competitors	94	47.0%	106	53.0%	0.72	0.396
State authorities	7	3.5%	193	96.5%	172.98	<0.001
Financial institutions	7	3.5%	193	96.5%	172.98	<0.001
Local institutions	9	4.5%	191	95.5%	165.62	<0.001
Media	13	6.5%	187	93.5%	151.38	<0.001
Trade unions	5	2.5%	195	97.5%	180.5	<0.001

Source: own study.

The highest percentage of respondents - 47.0%, n=94 - indicated that competition was negative for the company. The difference between the number of indications and no indications is not statistically significant, so it can be assumed that about half of the respondents consider competitors to be negatively oriented. The number of indications of each type of outsider is negatively oriented towards the company $\chi^2(df=12; N=173)=13.31$; $p<0.001$ (see Table 49).

Table 50. Internal stakeholders identified as crucial in determining the organisation's activities according to respondents

⁵ In this dissertation I understand investors as potential partners, who may invest in joint projects, without acquiring company's shares

Internal entities	Indication		No indication		chi-square	Relevance
	N	%	N	%		
Employees	50	25.0%	150	75.0%	50.00	<0.001
Owners	45	22.5%	155	77.5%	60.50	<0.001
Shareholders	66	33.0%	134	67.0%	23.12	<0.001
Supervisory boards	19	9.5%	181	90.5%	131.22	<0.001
Project Manager	23	11.5%	177	88.5%	118.58	<0.001
Project team members	23	11.5%	177	88.5%	118.58	<0.001
Project portfolio manager and/or program manager	15	7.5%	185	92.5%	144.50	<0.001
Project Sponsor	16	8.0%	184	92.0%	141.12	<0.001
Executives	29	14.5%	171	85.5%	100.82	<0.001

Source: own study.

A third of the respondent's state that the company's activities are adapted to the needs of the shareholders - 33.0%, N=66, significantly fewer - a quarter, N=50 mention the employees, with the owners in third place. The number of mentions of the different types of internal actors to which you adapt your enterprise's activities $\chi^2(df=8; N=286)=31.77; p<0.001$ (see Table 50).

Table 51. External stakeholders identified as crucial in determining the organisation's activities according to respondents

External entities	Indication		No indication		chi-square	Relevance
	N	%	N	%		
Customers	55	27.5%	145	72.5%	40.5	<0.001
Suppliers	14	7.0%	186	93.0%	147.92	<0.001
Contractors	14	7.0%	186	93.0%	147.92	<0.001
Subcontractors	8	4.0%	192	96.0%	169.28	<0.001
Users	17	8.5%	183	91.5%	137.78	<0.001
Investors	27	13.5%	173	86.5%	106.58	<0.001
Competitors	4	2.0%	196	98.0%	184.32	<0.001
State authorities	9	4.5%	191	95.5%	165.62	<0.001
Financial institutions	9	4.5%	191	95.5%	165.62	<0.001
Local institutions	6	3.0%	194	97.0%	176.72	<0.001
Media	1	0.5%	199	99.5%	196.02	<0.001
Trade unions	3	1.5%	197	98.5%	188.18	<0.001

Source: own study.

Table 51 shows that in terms of external parties, customers are the most frequently mentioned entity - 27.5%, n=55 - to which the company has to adapt. The least important were the media, trade unions and competitors. Number of references to each type of internal actor to which you adapt your enterprise's activities $\chi^2(df=12;N=167)=12.86; p<0.001$.

Table 52. The most important external stakeholder for the organisation according to respondents

Which external entity do you consider to be the key/most important stakeholder for your company?	N	%
Customers	104	52.0%
Suppliers	13	6.5%
Contractors	14	7.0%
Subcontractors	8	4.0%
Users	7	3.5%
Investors	21	10.5%
Competitors	5	2.5%
State authorities	8	4.0%
Financial institutions	9	4.5%
Local institutions	7	3.5%
Media	2	1.0%
Trade unions	2	1.0%
Total	200	100.0%

Source: own study.

Differences in the number of mentions of each type of stakeholder are statistically significant: $\chi^2(df=11, N=200)=517.72, p<0.001$. More than half of the respondents - 52.0%, N=104 indicate customers as the most important stakeholder, the next most important category being investors, which was identified by almost five times as many respondents - 10.5%, N=21. The media and trade unions were named least often - 1.0% each, N=2 respondents (see Table 52).

5.4. Survey data analysis – relations study

The survey also included the second part of questions on interorganisational relations, with a special focus on external stakeholders as entities that cooperate directly with companies in the ICT sector. The results of the survey are presented below.

Table 53. Initiator of new cooperation/projects

Who usually initiates the establishment of a new collaboration/project?	N	%
my business	73	36.5%
key external stakeholder	82	41.0%
cooperation is the result of a joint initiative	45	22.5%
Total	200	100.0%

Source: own study.

Table 53 shows that differences in the number of indications of each type of initiator of new cooperation are statistically significant: χ^2 (df=2, N=200)=11.17, p = 0.004. Key external stakeholders come first.

Table 54. Initiator of continuation of cooperation/project

Who usually initiates the continuation of the cooperation/project?	N	%
my business	63	31.5%
key external stakeholder	64	32.0%
continued cooperation is the result of a joint initiative	73	36.5%
Total	200	100.0%

Source: own study.

The differences in the numbers of indications of each type of initiator of the continuation of the cooperation are statistically insignificant: χ^2 (df=2, N=200)=0.91, p = 0.634, so all three types of potential initiators of the continuation of the project are equally often mentioned by respondents (see Table 54).

Table 55. Assessment of the company's position during negotiations

How do you rate your company's position during negotiations/cooperation?	N	%
weak position	13	6.5%
Slightly weaker position from a key external stakeholder	60	30.0%

equal position of both companies	86	43.0%
Slightly stronger position from key external stakeholder	23	11.5%
hold	18	9.0%
Total	200	100.0%

Source: own study.

Table 55 shows that the differences in the number of references to certain types of company evaluation during negotiations are statistically significant: χ^2 (df=4, N=200)=100.45, $p < 0.001$. Relatively the largest number of respondents - 43.0%, N=86 - indicated the same position of both companies, 30.0%, N=60 indicated a slightly weaker position.

Table 56. The frequency of achieving the initial goals set before negotiations

How often do you achieve the initial goals set by your company before negotiations begin?	N	%
never	6	3.0%
rarely	35	17.5%
in about half of the cases	90	45.0%
often	60	30.0%
always	9	4.5%
Total	200	100.0%

Source: own study.

Differences in the number of mentions of each negotiation outcome are statistically significant: χ^2 (df=4, N=200)=126.05, $p < 0.001$. The relatively largest number of respondents - 45.0%, N=90 - indicated half of the cases, the answer often was chosen by 30.0%, N=60 respondents. Considering the two extremes of the possible answers together, it can be concluded that a higher percentage - 34.5% of negotiations have favourable results, while 20.5% have unfavourable results (see Table 56).

Table 57. A modification of objectives and operational procedures due to the influence of a significant external stakeholder

How often do you change your stated goals / methods of operations / projected profits and costs as a result of the actions of a key external stakeholder?	N	%
never	7	3.5%
rarely	60	30.0%
in about half of the cases	76	38.0%

often	50	25.0%
always	7	3.5%
Total	200	100.0%

Source: own study.

The differences in the number of indications of the frequency of goal changes under the influence of the key stakeholder's actions are statistically significant: χ^2 (df =4, N=200)=99.35, $p < 0.001$. Relatively the most respondents - 38.0%, N=76 indicated the middle answer, i.e. half of the cases, and the rare answer - 30.0%, N=60 (see Table 57).

Table 58. The effect of actions taken during negotiations or when establishing cooperation on the final outcome

What impact do your actions during negotiation/establishment have on the final outcome?	N	%
lack of impact	8	4.0%
insignificant impact	30	15.0%
average impact	87	43.5%
high impact	63	31.5%
full impact	12	6.0%
Total	200	100.0%

Source: own study.

The differences in the numbers of indications of the levels of frequency of influence of the activities undertaken during the negotiation on the final result are statistically significant: χ^2 (df =4, N=200)=116.15, $p < 0.001$. The relatively most frequent answer was medium influence - 45.5% N=87 and high influence - 31.5%, N=63 (see Table 58).

Table 59. Imposing a certain way of doing things

Does your company impose a certain way of doing things/its will?	N	%
the company never imposes its will	4	2.0%
the company rarely imposes its will	51	25.5%
company mostly imposes its will	89	44.5%
the company often imposes its will	50	25.0%
the company always imposes its will	6	3.0%
Total	200	100.0%

Source: own study.

Table 59 shows that the differences in the numbers of responses to the question about imposing a course of action by the respondent's company are statistically significant: χ^2 (df =4, N=200)=126.85, $p < 0.001$, 44.5%, N=89 participants answered that their "the company mostly imposes its will".

Table 60. Adapting to the other party expectations

Which entity is more in tune with the expectations of the other party?	N	%
my business	40	20.0%
key external stakeholder	84	42.0%
both companies jointly develop a consensus	76	38.0%
Total	200	100.0%

Source: own study.

The differences in the number of responses to the question about adapting to the other party are statistically significant: χ^2 (df =2, N=200)=16.48, $p < 0.001$. The responses are at similar levels: "most important external stakeholder" - 42.0%, N=84 and: "both companies develop consensus together" - 38.0%, N=76 (see Table 60).

Table 61. Additional benefits for the company in connection with negotiations

How often does your company receive additional benefits as a result of your negotiation/establishment activities?	N	%
never	13	6.5%
rarely	62	31.0%
in about half of the cases	83	41.5%
often	36	18.0%
always	6	3.0%
Total	200	100.0%

Source: own study.

The differences in the counts of the frequency of mentioning additional benefits for the company in connection with negotiations are statistically significant: χ^2 (df =4, N=200)=105.85, $p < 0.001$. 41.5%, N=83 respondents answer half the time. Rarely and never responses account for 37.5% and often and always responses account for 21.0% (see Table 61).

Table 62. The frequency of considering the position of a key stakeholder in business decisions

How often does your company consider the position of a key external stakeholder when making business decisions?	N	%
never	3	1.5%
rarely	45	22.5%
in about half of the cases	93	46.5%
often	46	23.0%
always	13	6.5%
Total	200	100.0%

Source: own study.

Table 62 shows that differences in the number of responses regarding the frequency of considering the position of a key stakeholder in business decisions are statistically significant: χ^2 (df =4, N=200)=124.2, $p < 0.001$. 46.5%, N=93 respondents believe this happens half the time. 29.5%, N=56 respondents answered often and always, and 24.0%, N=48 answered rarely and never.

Table 63. The relationship between a company and a key external stakeholder

What is the asset relationship between your company and a key external stakeholder?	N	%
key external stakeholder almost always has fewer assets	12	6.0%
key external stakeholder is more likely to have fewer assets	59	29.5%
both parties have a similar level of wealth	75	37.5%
key external stakeholder is more likely to have more assets	44	22.0%
key external stakeholder almost always has more wealth	10	5.0%
Total	200	100.0%

Source: own study.

The differences in the numbers of indications of the response categories of the respondent's company's wealth relations and the main stakeholder are statistically significant: χ^2 (df =4, N=200)=82.15, $p < 0.001$. 37.5%, N=75 respondents say they have similar levels of wealth, 37.5%, N=59 respondents indicate that the key external stakeholder is more likely to have less wealth (see Table 63).

Table 64. The frequency of changing the group of collaborating entities

How often does the circle of entities with which your company cooperates change?	N	%
does not undergo changes or they are very rare	18	9.0%
rarely	51	25.5%
sometimes	65	32.5%
often	48	24.0%
very often	18	9.0%
Total	200	100.0%

Source: own study.

Differences in the numbers of indications of the levels of frequency of changing the circle of cooperating entities are statistically significant: χ^2 (df =4, N=200)=44.45, $p < 0.001$. 9.0% each, N=18 survey participants indicate very frequent versus very infrequent changes. The most frequent response was frequent = 32.5%, N=65 (see Table 64).

Table 65. The duration of an organisation's engagement with a key external stakeholder

What is the typical duration of your organisation's engagement with a key external stakeholder?	N	%
less than 12 months	66	33.0%
over 12 months	134	67.0%
Total	200	100.0%

Source: own study.

Table 65 shows that differences in the number of responses to the question about the duration of cooperation with a key external stakeholder are statistically significant: χ^2 (df =1, N=200)=23.12, $p < 0.001$, 2/3 contracts are concluded for a period of more than 12 months.

Table 66. Decision on the length of cooperation with a key external stakeholder

Who influences the length of time your organisation partners with a key external stakeholder?	N	%
always my company	16	8.0%
more often my company	43	21.5%
both sides have similar influence	99	49.5%
more often a key external stakeholder	38	19.0%
always a key external stakeholder	4	2.0%

Total	200	100.0%
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Source: own study.

Differences in the number of responses to the question of who influences the duration of the cooperation agreement are statistically significant: χ^2 (df=4, N=200)=134.15, $p < 0.001$. Almost half - 49.0%, N=99 - say that the influence of the parties to the agreement is symmetrical or that they influence the duration of the agreement - 21.5%, N=43 (see Table 66).

Table 67. Sharing know-how during cooperation

Which entity during the cooperation uses/shares its know-how to achieve a common goal?	N	%
always my company	8	4.0%
more often my company	36	18.0%
Both parties share their know-how with each other	93	46.5%
more often a key external stakeholder	56	28.0%
always a key external stakeholder	7	3.5%
Total	200	100.0%

Source: own study.

Table 67 presents that differences in the number of responses to the question about sharing know-how are statistically significant: χ^2 (df=4, N=200)=129.85, $p < 0.00$. Almost half of the responses - 46.6%, N=93 - indicate symmetric collaboration. 31.5%, N=63 responses indicate more openness from the stakeholder, while 22.0%, N=44 indicate more openness from their own company.

Table 68. Sharing know-how after cooperation

In connection with the collaboration, does your company share its know-how with a key external stakeholder to enable them to benefit from it in the future?	N	%
yes	61	30.5%
not	58	29.0%
it is difficult to point out	81	40.5%
Total	200	100.0%

Source: own study.

Differences in the number of responses to the question about sharing know how for future use are not statistically significant: χ^2 (df=2, N=200)=4.69, $p = 0.096$ (see Table 68).

Table 69. The ability to control the actions of the stakeholder

Does your cooperative enterprise have the ability to control the actions of a key external stakeholder and correct their actions on an ongoing basis?	N	%
yes	66	33.0%
not	61	30.5%
it is difficult to point out	73	36.5%
Total	200	100.0%

Source: own study.

Differences in the number of responses to the question about the ability to control the actions of the stakeholder are not statistically significant: χ^2 (df =2, N=200)=1.09, $p = 0.580$ (see Table 69).

Table 70. Terminating the cooperation or project

Which entity has the right to unilaterally terminate the cooperation or project without special reasons?	N	%
my business	16	8.0%
key external stakeholder	51	25.5%
Both entities have the right to unilaterally terminate cooperation	117	58.5%
Neither entity has the right to unilaterally terminate cooperation	16	8.0%
Total	200	100.0%

Source: own study.

Differences in the number of responses to the question about the possibility of terminating cooperation without sufficient reasons are statistically significant: χ^2 (df =3, N=200)=136.04, $p < 0.001$, more than half - 58.5%, N=117 respondents indicate a symmetrical relationship (see Table 70).

Table 71. Initiating the end of a cooperation

At the initiative of which entity does the cooperation most often end?	N	%
my company	20	10.0%
key external stakeholder	71	35.5%
cooperation ends by mutual consent	109	54.5%
Total	200	100.0%

Source: own study.

Table 71 shows that the differences in the number of responses to the question initiative to end cooperation are statistically significant: χ^2 (df =2, N=200)=59.83, p <0.001, with more than half of 54.5%, N=109 survey participants indicating mutual agreement.

Table 72. Alternative contractor to the services/goods within a short period of time (up to 3 months)

In your opinion. could contractors find a full-fledged alternative to your services/goods in a short period of time (up to 3 months)?	N	%
yes	43	21.5%
not	80	40.0%
it is difficult to point out	77	38.5%
Total	200	100.0%

Source: own study.

Differences in the number of responses to the question about manoeuvrability on the part of contractors are statistically significant: χ^2 (df =2, N=200)=12.67, p = 0.002. The lowest percentage -21.5%, N=43 believe that contractors will quickly find alternatives to the services/goods of the company the respondent represents, 40.0%, N=80 are of the opposite opinion (see Table 72).

Table 73. Responsibility for failures

Which entity takes responsibility for the failure of the collaboration/project?	N	%
my business	20	10.0%
key external stakeholder	46	23.0%
both companies jointly take responsibility for failures	96	48.0%
none of the entities	38	19.0%
Total	200	100.0%

Source: own study.

Table 73 presents that the differences in the number of responses to the question about responsibility for failure are statistically significant: χ^2 (df =3, N=200)=63.52, p <0.001. The lowest percentage -21.5%, N=43 believe that contractors will quickly find an alternative to the services/goods of the company the respondent represents, 40.0%, N=80 hold the opposite view.

Table 74. Trusting in a key external stakeholder

Does your company trust a key external stakeholder?	N	%
yes	63	31.5%
not	41	20.5%
Yes, but significantly limited	67	33.5%
it is difficult to point out	29	14.5%
Total	200	100.0%

Source: own study.

Table 74 shows that the differences in the number of responses to the question on trust in a key external stakeholder are statistically significant: χ^2 (df =3, N=200)=19.6, $p < 0.001$. One third of respondents, N=63 have limited trust in a key stakeholder, 20.0%, N=41 have no trust in external stakeholders.

In summary, the frequency of responses to questions about relationships varied greatly, with only questions 11, 25, and 26 having similar frequencies (refer to Table 73).

Table 75. Comparison of the number of relationships survey

Question		Comparison of numbers - chi-square test
Question 10	Who mostly initiates the establishment of a new collaboration/project?	χ^2 (df =2, N=200)=11.17, $p = 0.004$
Question 11	Who usually initiates the continuation of the cooperation/project?	χ^2 (df =2, N=200)=0.91, $p = 0.634$
Question 12	How do you assess your company's position during negotiations/cooperation?	χ^2 (df =4, N=200)=100.45, $p < 0.001$
Question 13	How often do you achieve the initial goals set by your company before negotiations begin?	χ^2 (df =4, N=200)=126.05, $p < 0.001$
Question 14	How often do you change your stated goals / methods of operation / projected profits and costs as a result of the actions of a key external stakeholder?	χ^2 (df =4, N=200)=99.35, $p < 0.001$
Question 15	What impact do your actions during the negotiation / establishment have on the final outcome?	χ^2 (df =4, N=200)=116.15, $p < 0.001$
Question 16	Does your company impose a certain way of doing things?	χ^2 (df =4, N=200)=126.85, $p < 0.001$
Question 17	Which company is more in tune with the expectations of the other party?	χ^2 (df =2, N=200)=16.48, $p < 0.001$
Question 18	How often does your company receive additional benefits as a result of your negotiation/establishment activities?	χ^2 (df =4, N=200)=105.85, $p < 0.001$
Question 19	How often does your company consider the position of an important external stakeholder when making business decisions?	χ^2 (df =4, N=200)=124.2, $p < 0.001$

Question 20	What is the asset relationship between your company and an important external stakeholder?	χ^2 (df=4, N=200)=82.15, p <0.001
Question 21	How often does the group of companies with which your company cooperates change?	χ^2 (df=4, N=200)=44.45, p <0.001
Question 22	What is the average duration of your company's partnerships with an important external stakeholder?	χ^2 (df=1, N=200)=23.12, p <0.001
Question 23	Who influences the duration of your company's partnerships with a key external stakeholder?	χ^2 (df=4, N=200)=134.15, p <0.001
Question 24	Which entity during the collaboration uses/shares its know-how to achieve a common goal?	χ^2 (df=4, N=200)=129.85, p <0.001
Question 25	In connection with the collaboration, does your company share its know-how with a key external stakeholder so that they can benefit from it in the future?	χ^2 (df=2, N=200)=4.69, p = 0.096
Question 26	Does your collaborating company have the ability to control and correct the actions of a key external stakeholder on an ongoing basis?	χ^2 (df=2, N=200)=1.09, p = 0.580
Question 27	Which company has the right to unilaterally terminate the cooperation or end the project without special reasons?	χ^2 (df=3, N=200)=136.04, p <0.001
Question 28	Which company's initiative most often ends the cooperation?	χ^2 (df=2, N=200)=59.83, p <0.001
Question 29	Do you think contractors could find a full alternative to your services in the short term?	χ^2 (df=2, N=200)=12.67, p = 0.002
Question 30	Which entity takes responsibility for the failure of the collaboration/project?	χ^2 (df=3, N=200)=63.52, p <0.001

Source: own study.

Shareholders are by far the most interested in the company's success. A prominent category of those not interested in the company's success are competitors. Competitors were described as having a negative attitude towards the company by 47.0%, N=94 respondents, i.e. almost half of the respondents. A relatively large group of respondents, 46.0% and 41.5% respectively, believe that shareholders and employees have a positive attitude towards the company. Customers (32.5%) and suppliers (30.5%) are the most frequently mentioned positive external stakeholders. Marginal external stakeholders are the media and trade unions.

The most frequently pointed initiators of new collaborations among the companies surveyed are key external stakeholders. Continuers of collaborations are equally the surveyed company and the external stakeholder or joint initiative. In about half of the cases, the companies' objectives are changed as a result of the actions of a key external stakeholder. Respondents consider their company's bargaining power to be equal to that of the key stakeholder. According to the respondents, the outcome of the negotiations is more favourable than unfavourable and the actions taken influence the outcome of the negotiations. In the majority, i.e. According to 80% of the statements (N=120), the respondent's company does not

adapt to the expectations of the other party; it is the other party that adapts to the respondent's company. Additional benefits from negotiations are not the rule, but occur occasionally. Most cooperation agreements have a duration of more than 23 months. Typically, the surveyed company has more assets than the main stakeholder and it is the main external stakeholder that adapts to the expectations of the surveyed company. When asked about the imposition of a certain way of doing things, as many as 145 respondents answered that it is their company that mostly, often or always imposes its will, indicating the presence of asymmetry in this sector.

5.5. Summary

The research question answered in this chapter was (SRQ5): Is there a power asymmetry in the interorganisational relations in the companies of the ICT sector in Poland? The answer was related to the scientific objective (SRO5) of identifying the state of power asymmetry in ICT companies in Poland based on survey data analysis.

In this chapter I was able to identify the most important external stakeholders. Customers (mentioned by half of the respondents 52.0%, N=104), Investors, Contractors and Suppliers were considered the most important external stakeholders.

The conclusion of this chapter is that there is a power asymmetry in interorganisational relations in ICT enterprises in Poland. The enterprise being interviewed typically has more assets than the main stakeholder, and it is the main external stakeholder who adapts to the expectations of the enterprise. When asked about the imposition of a certain way of doing things, 145 respondents answered that their company usually, often, or always imposes its will, indicating an asymmetry in this sector. The objective mentioned in this chapter has been achieved, and identified power asymmetry in ICT companies in Poland based on survey data analysis will enable me to construct a model in Chapter 6. Moreover, the response to the additional question presented in this chapter has enabled me to partially address the main objective of this doctoral dissertation, which was to identify the state of power asymmetry in interorganisational relationships within the ICT sector in Poland.

Chapter 6

AN ATTEMPT TO BUILD A MODEL OF ENTERPRISE MANAGEMENT IN POWER ASYMMETRY

6.1. Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to answer the sixth additional research question (SRQ6) posed in this study: Is it possible to build a model of managing the power asymmetry in the interorganisational relationships in the ICT sector in Poland? Formulating an answer to the research question presented will achieve the supporting objective (SRO6): An attempt to build a model of power asymmetry in interorganisational relations in the ICT sector in Poland.

The additional question is closely linked to the main research question: What form should the model of managing the power asymmetry in the interorganisational relationships in the ICT sector in Poland take? Formulating an answer to the research question will help to achieve the main objective of the doctoral dissertation to identify the state of power asymmetry and an attempt to build a model of managing the power asymmetry in the interorganisational relationships in the ICT sector in Poland.

The model of managing power asymmetry in interorganisational relations in the ICT sector that will be presented in this chapter, both semantically and conceptually, will show the extant relations between enterprises, and also help to reflect the real way of dealing with the of power asymmetry between organisations. Additionally, in this chapter, there will be discussion about the differences between the ways in which different companies manage power asymmetry. The given model will only be considered as a partial, empirically confirmed pattern of managing power asymmetry in the ICT sector, but primarily as a theoretical construction (a mapping model with morphological model shape). The model may be of key importance for further research in interorganisational relationships, complementing the theory devoted to these issues. The constructed model can not only be used to deepen further research on asymmetry in the ICT sector in Poland but can also be used in practice.

6.2. Identification of power asymmetry in the context of stakeholders in the ICT sector in Poland according to their salience using the Stakeholder Saliency Model

In the given work, modelling will be understood as the creation of a model, i.e., in a narrow way. The doctoral dissertation attempts to build a model for managing power asymmetries in interorganisational relationships. As a result of a survey, an answer was obtained as to which interorganisational relations are considered to be key among respondents representing individual ICT companies. The given analysis will average out the results for the surveyed sample, combining the answers given in relation to the key stakeholders in the ICT sector in Poland. Thus, in order to build the model, enterprises will be divided according to the choice of entity that was indicated as key, and then analysed. Further analyses will be conducted on the groups that were most frequently selected (where the selection threshold is set at 5%), so that only relevant values will emerge. Thus, further analyses and an attempt to build the model will be on:

- Customers, where N=104;
- Investors, where N=21;
- Contractors, where N=14;
- Suppliers, where N=13.

The results of the analysis appear to be particularly relevant and interesting, as they will make it possible to describe the behaviour of companies in relation to the key external stakeholders most frequently indicated by the interviewees. The respondents (over half of the sample) indicated customers as the most important stakeholders (Definitive stakeholder) in accordance with the definition indicated in the Stakeholder Saliency Model adapted from Mitchell et al. (1997, p. 873), which was presented and explained by the interviewer to the respondents at the beginning of the survey. The remaining stakeholder groups, namely - Investors, executives and suppliers were also indicated as Definitive Stakeholders by some respondents, however, the indicated groups were not as numerous as customers, so the analysis of customers as representing the Definitive Stakeholders seems to be the most valuable.

The frequencies of the individual responses in the section related to relationships were considered only for the main stakeholder - customers (N = 104). The frequency table shows the abundances and proportions relative to the total surveyed population (N = 104). A proportions test was used to assess the statistical significance of the proportion of counts relative to the whole population (N = 104), while the percentages of response categories within a given

question were compared using a chi-square test of concordance. The non-significance of the proportions test ($p>0.05$) indicates that the abundance of a given response category is close to half of the total collective.

Table 76. Starting a new collaboration/project

Question	Answer	N	%	Relevance Z	Significance χ^2
Who is usually the initiator of a new collaboration/project?	My company	39	37.5%	0.014	0.468
	Key external stakeholder	36	34.6%	0.002	
	The cooperation is the result of a common initiative	29	27.9%	<0.001	

Source: own study.

The percentages of responses to the question on who the initiator of a new collaboration is predominantly are similar. The chi-square test of concordance equals 0,468 and the test of proportions indicates that the percentages of responses to each of the three categories are significantly lower than $N=104$, so none of the responses predominate. Respondents are equally in favour of each of the answers to the question on the initiators of collaboration. Equally often the initiator is the respondent's company, as well as a key stakeholder or a joint initiative (see Table 76).

Table 77. Continuation of the cooperation/project

Content of the question	Answers	N	%	Relevance Z	Significance χ^2
Who usually initiates the continuation of the cooperation/project?	My company	29	27.9%	<0.001	0.062
	Key stakeholder	29	27.9%	<0.001	
	The continued cooperation is the result of a joint initiative	46	44.2%	0.281	

Source: own study.

Table 77 shows that in the percentages of responses to the question of who the initiator of the continuation of the cooperation is mostly vary. For the response category Continuation of cooperation is the result of a joint initiative the result of the proportions test is not significant:

$p = 0.28$; 44.2% of respondents declare that continuation of cooperation is the result of a joint initiative. This means that the proportion of respondents representing this view is not significantly lower than $N=104$.

Table 78. The position during negotiations/cooperation

Content of the question	Answers	N	%	Relevance Z	Significance χ^2
How do you assess the position of your company during negotiations/cooperation?	Weak position	40	38.5%	0.024	0.052
	The equal position of the two companies	41	39.4%	0.039	
	A strong position	23	22.1%	<0.001	

Source: own study.

The percentages of responses to the question about this position of the company during negotiations are similar. The test of proportions indicates that the percentages of responses to each of the three categories are significantly lower than $N=104$, so that none of the responses prevails. However, it can be noted that the chi-square test only slightly exceeded the threshold for statistical significance: $p = 0.052$. It can therefore be assumed that a relatively small percentage of respondents - 22.1%, $N = 23$ rate the company's negotiating position as strong. Nevertheless, this indicates that the surveyed enterprises are in a position of strength compared to other organisations (see Table 78).

Table 79. Initial objectives

Content of the question	Answers	N	%	Relevance Z	Significance χ^2
How often do you achieve the initial objectives set by your company before negotiations begin?	Rarely or never	19	18.3%	<0.001	0.001
	In about half of the cases	49	47.1%	0.624	
	Often or always	36	34.6%	0.002	

Source: own study.

Table 79 shows that the nearly half of the respondents 47.1%, $N = 48$ believe that in about half of the cases negotiation assumptions are achieved. This group is significantly more numerous than the groups of respondents selecting the extreme answers and at the same time

proportional to the size of the total sample. This is significantly more, compared to the other two response categories.

Table 80. Changing objectives

Content of the question	Answers	N	%	Relevance Z	Significance χ^2
How often do you change your stated objectives / methods of operation / projected profits and costs as a result of the actions of a key external stakeholder?	Rarely or never	36	34.6%	0.002	0.234
	In about half of the cases	41	39.4%	0.039	
	Often or always	27	26.0%	<0.001	

Source: own study.

The percentages of responses to the question on assumptions and objectives do not differ significantly. Furthermore, the responses for each category are clearly less than half of the surveyed population (see Table 80).

Table 81. Impact on the final outcome

Content of the question	Answers	N	%	Relevance Z	Significance χ^2
What impact do your actions during the negotiation/cooperation have on the final outcome?	Little or no impact	23	22.1%	<0.001	0.029
	Average impact	45	43.3%	0.202	
	High or full impact	36	34.6%	0.002	

Source: own study.

Table 81 shows that the the majority of respondents rate the influence of their company on the activities undertaken during negotiations as medium. The percentage of such responses is 43.3%, N = 45. Furthermore, this percentage is not significantly lower than half of the surveyed group.

Table 82. The imposition of will

Content of the question	Answers	N	%	Relevance Z	Significance χ^2
Does your company impose a certain way of doing things/its will?	Rarely or never imposes its will	35	33.7%	0.001	0.074
	Mostly imposes its will	44	42.3%	0.141	
	Often or always imposes its will	25	24.0%	<0.001	

Source: own study.

Half of the survey participants claim that their company predominantly imposes its will in its relations with other entities - 42.3%, N= 44. However, if the response percentages are compared with each other, it can be observed that they do not differ significantly. This shows that most of the surveyed enterprises feel in a position of strength (see Table 82).

Table 83. Meeting others expectations

Content of the question	Answers	N	%	Relevance Z	Significance χ^2
Which entity is more in tune with the expectations of the other party?	My company	21	20.2%	<0.001	0.017
	Both companies jointly develop a consensus	41	39.4%	0.039	
	Key external stakeholder	42	40.4%	0.062	

Source: own study.

In the answers to the question about aligning with the expectations of the other party, the most common answer is that of a key external stakeholder. This is considered by 40.4%, N = 42 of the surveyed collective, and a test of proportions showed that this percentage is not significantly different from the 50% value (see Table 83).

Table 84. Benefits from negotiations

Content of the question	Answers	N	%	Relevance Z	Significance χ^2
How often does your company receive additional benefits as a result of your negotiation/cooperation activities?	Rarely or never	38	36.5%	0.008	0.006
	In about half of the cases	46	44.2%	0.281	
	Often or always	20	19.2%	<0.001	

Source: own study.

Table 84 shows that 44.3%, N = 46 of the respondents believe that in about half of the cases their company obtains additional benefits from the cooperation, this is close to half, as indicated by the non-significant test for proportions, and significantly more compared to the other two response categories, as can be inferred from the significance of the chi-square test.

Table 85. Considering the position of a key external stakeholder when making business decisions

Content of the question	Answers	N	%	Relevance Z	Significance χ^2
	Rarely or never	22	21.2%	<0.001	0.008

How often does your company consider the position of a key external stakeholder when making business decisions?	In about half of the cases	48	46.2%	0.493	
	Often or always	34	32.7%	<0.001	

Source: own study.

Table 85 shows that the most common answer to the question about taking the position of the main stakeholder into account when making business decisions is about half the time. Nearly half - 46.2%, N = 48 of the surveyed population gave this answer - a test of proportions yielded a non-significant result. Moreover, this is the most numerous response category, as indicated by the significance of the chi-square test.

Table 86. Assets of a key external stakeholder

Content of the question	Answers	N	%	Relevance Z	Significance χ^2
What asset relationship exists between your company and a key external stakeholder?	Key external stakeholder has fewer assets	27	26.0%	<0.001	0.234
	Both parties have a similar level of wealth	41	39.4%	0.039	
	Key external stakeholder has more assets	36	34.6%	0.002	

Source: own study.

The percentages of all three response categories are close to each other, none approaching the 50% value. There is no predominance of any answer, with respondents choosing each option in similar proportions, oscillating around the value of one third (see Table 86).

Table 87. Changes in the circle of entities

Content of the question	Answers	N	%	Relevance Z	Significance χ^2
How often is the change circle of actors with whom your company cooperates?	Rarely or never	45	43.3%	0.202	0.055
	Sometimes	34	32.7%	<0.001	
	Often or very often	25	24.0%	<0.001	

Source: own study.

According to the result of the ratio test, the percentage 43.3%, N = 45 is close to half of the answers given by the respondents, so the circle of entities cooperating rarely or never changes. At the same time, the response percentages for the three categories do not differ significantly (see Table 87).

Table 88. Relationship duration

Content of the question	Answers	N	%	Relevance Z	Significance χ^2
For what period do your company's collaborations with a key external stakeholder usually last?	Below 12 months	28	26.9%	<0.001	<0.001
	Over 12 months	76	73.1%	<0.001	

Source: own study.

Collaborations with a duration of at least one year prevail by far - 73.1%, N = 76. They account for more than two-thirds of the collaboration agreements (see Table 88).

Table 89. Influences on the duration relationship

Content of the question	Answers	N	%	Relevance Z	Significance χ^2
Who influences the duration of your company's partnerships with a key external stakeholder?	Always my company	12	11.5%	<0.001	<0.001
	More often my company	24	23.1%	<0.001	
	Both parties have a similar impact	48	46.2%	0.493	
	More often a key external stakeholder	20	19.2%	<0.001	

Source: own study.

The highest percentage of respondents believe that both parties have a similar influence on the duration of the cooperation agreement - 46.2%, N = 48. This was the answer chosen by the highest number of respondents (see Table 89).

Table 90. Entity that uses/shares its know-how during the cooperation to achieve a common goal

Content of the question	Answers	N	%	Relevance Z	Significance χ^2
Which entity uses/shares its know-how during the cooperation to achieve a common goal?	More often or always my company	23	22.1%	<0.001	0.002
	Both parties make their know-how available to each other	51	49.0%	0.922	
	More often or always a key external stakeholder	30	28.8%	<0.001	

Source: own study.

The relatively most significant group of respondents believes that during cooperation both parties share know-how with each other - 49.0%, N = 51. This percentage is significantly higher than for the selection of the other two categories (see Table 90).

Table 91. Entity that allows to use/shar know-how after the cooperation

Content of the question	Answers	N	%	Relevance Z	Significance χ^2
In relation to collaboration, does your company share its know-how with a key external stakeholder to enable them to benefit from it in the future?	Yes	27	26.0%	<0.001	<0.001
	Not	23	22.1%	<0.001	
	It is difficult to identify	54	51.9%	0.769	

Source: own study.

The vast majority of respondents - 51.9%, N = 54 - do not know whether their know-how can be used by cooperating stakeholders in the future. Therefore, the safest option is to not share company's know-how (see Table 91).

Table 92. Controlling the actions of a key external stakeholder

Content of the question	Answers	N	%	Relevance Z	Significance χ^2
Does your company within the framework of the cooperation has the possibility to control the actions of a key external stakeholder and correct their actions on an ongoing basis?	Yes	27	26.0%	<0.001	0.001
	Not	25	24.0%	<0.001	
	It is difficult to identify	52	50.0%	1.000	

Source: own study.

Table 92 shows that the exactly half - 50%, N = 50 - of the survey participants do not know if their company, as part of the collaboration, has the ability to control the activities of a key external stakeholder. This is a significantly higher response rate than the choices of the other two categories.

Table 93. Termination of cooperation without reason

Content of the question	Answers	N	%	Relevance Z	Significance χ^2
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Which entity has the right to unilaterally break off cooperation or terminate a project without specific grounds?	My company	8	7.7%	<0.001	<0.001
	Key external stakeholder	24	23.1%	<0.001	
	Both entities have the right to unilaterally terminate the cooperation	60	57.7%	0.141	
	Neither entity shall have the right to unilaterally terminate cooperation	12	11.5%	<0.001	

Source: own study.

The majority of survey participants reported that both entities have the right to unilaterally break the cooperation - 57.7%, N = 60. This is the most frequently selected answer (see Table 93).

Table 94. Termination of the cooperation

Content of the question	Answers	N	%	Relevance Z	Significance χ^2
At the initiative of which entity does cooperation most often end?	My company	8	7.7%	<0.001	<0.001
	Key external stakeholder	35	33.7%	0.001	
	Cooperation ends by mutual agreement	61	58.7%	0.095	

Source: own study.

Table 94 shows that the majority of respondents believe that the cooperation ends by mutual consent - 58.7%, N = 61. It is worth noting that a negligible percentage of respondents reported that the cooperation ends at the initiative of their company - 7.7%, N = 8. This value is significantly lower than the answer that the cooperation ends at the initiative of the other entity. This is indicated by the performed comparison of counts between the two answers (N = 8 and N = 35), for which the chi-square test is statistically significant: $p < 0.001$.

Table 95. Change of partner in a relationship

Content of the question	Answers	N	%	Relevance Z	Significance χ^2
In your opinion, could contractors find a fully-fledged alternative to your	Yes	13	12.5%	<0.001	<0.001
	Not	34	32.7%	<0.001	

services/goods in the short term (up to 3 months)?	It is difficult to identify	57	54.8%	0.378	
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Source: own study.

The majority of respondents - 54.8%, N = 57 - do not know whether contractors are able to source an equivalent service or product from another supplier in the short term. The answer difficult to indicate was given most often. However, as many as 32% of respondents think that others would be able to find alternative options, so some companies feel in a position of strength (see Table 95).

Table 96. Taking responsibility for the failure of the collaboration/project

Content of the question	Answers	N	%	Relevance Z	Significance χ^2
Which actor takes responsibility for the failure of the collaboration/project?	My company	12	11.5%	<0.001	<0.001
	Key external stakeholder	19	18.3%	<0.001	
	Both companies share responsibility for failures	43	41.3%	0.095	
	None of the entities	30	28.8%	<0.001	

Source: own study.

The highest proportion of respondents believe that both companies share responsibility for failures - 41.3%, N = 43. This proves positive relations with other enterprises and not shifting responsibility to other enterprises. The next most frequently indicated answer is: "None of the entities" (see Table 96).

Table 97. A key external stakeholder in context of trust

Content of the question	Answers	N	%	Relevance Z	Significance χ^2
Does your company have confidence in a key external stakeholder?	Not	15	14.4%	<0.001	0.001
	Yes	32	30.8%	<0.001	
	Yes, but significantly reduced	40	38.5%	0.024	
	It is difficult to identify	17	16.3%	<0.001	

Source: own study.

The percentages of selected response categories vary significantly. Affirmative answers occur with similar frequency. The least frequent answer is negative - 14.4%, N = 15. It can be inferred from this that respondents have confidence in a key external stakeholder (see Table 97).

Based on the above data and the data contained in chapter five, a Stakeholder Saliience model was built for the external stakeholders of enterprises from the ICT sector in Poland (see Figure 20).

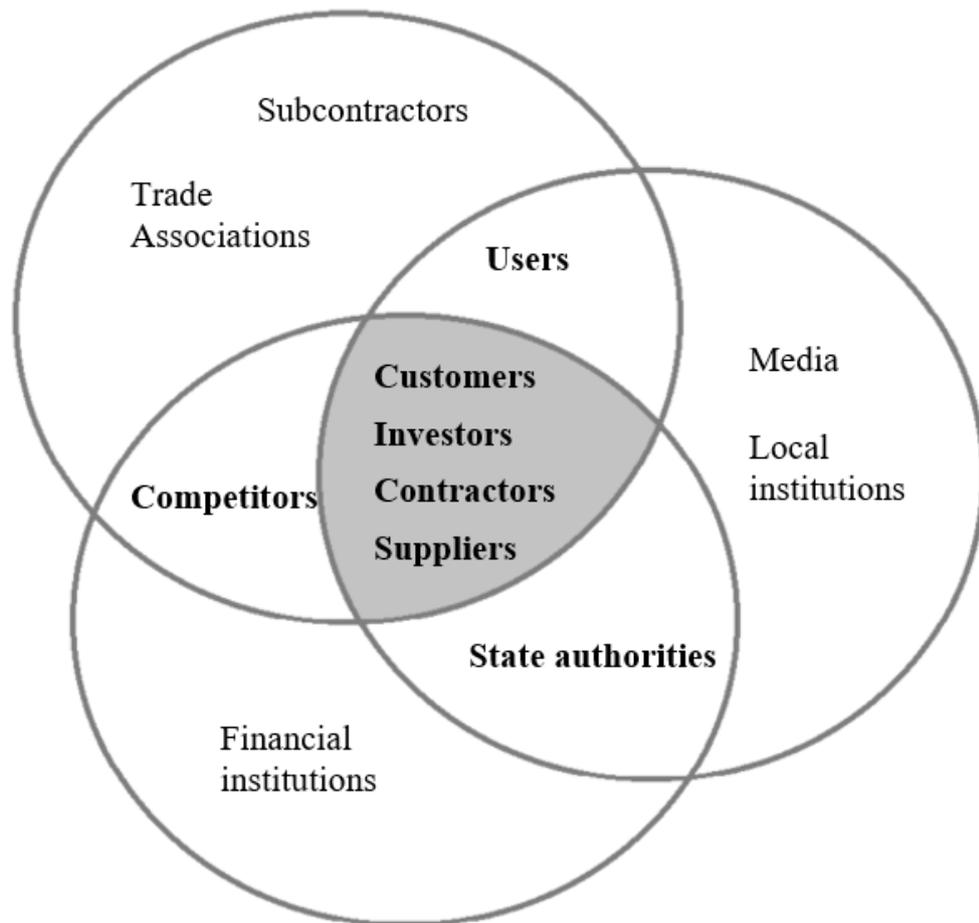


Figure 20. An example of Stakeholder Saliience model ICT sector in Poland for the for the external stakeholders of enterprises

Source: own elaboration based on Mitchell et al. (1997, p.873).

The answers provided by respondents in the survey allowed me to divide external stakeholders according to the Stakeholder Saliience model. Accordingly, their impact on the power, urgency and legitimacy was assessed. According to the respondents, the Definitive Stakeholders include Customers, Investors, Contractors and Suppliers, with the reservation that the most frequently chosen answer was customers (according to more than half of the respondents). Users, Competitors and State authorities have two of the three characteristics and are moderately important. They are active but are seen only as groups waiting for their needs to be met. The last group are hidden stakeholders, having only one of the three attributes.

According to managers, they are not important enough to adapt their strategy to these stakeholder groups.

6.3. Relations analysis of connections between key external stakeholders and companies in the ICT sector in Poland

In this part of the work, the answers of respondents who indicated Customers, Investors, Contractors and Suppliers as the most important and important external stakeholders were combined with answers to questions about relationships. The responses of respondents who identified the most important external stakeholders are in cross tabulations. The study of the 4 groups of stakeholders who were indicated in the previous subsection as "Definitive Stakeholders" will allow for finding dependencies and differences in the ways of dealing with the power asymmetry in interorganisational relations by examining the respondents' choices depending on the group of stakeholders they chose as the most important.

Table 98. New collaboration/project - Customers, Investors, Contractors and Suppliers

Who is usually the initiator of the cooperation/project?	Customers		Investors		Contractors		Suppliers		Total	
My company	39	37.5%	13	61.9%	3	21.4%	3	23.1%	58	30.9%
Key stakeholder	36	34.6%	4	19.0%	6	42.9%	5	38.5%	51	40.1%
Joint initiative	29	27.9%	4	19.0%	5	35.7%	3	23.1%	41	28.9%
Total	104	100.0%	21	100.0%	14	100.0%	13	100.0%	152	100.0%

Source: own study.

Table 98 shows that more than half - 61.9%, N = 13 - of the respondents who selected the entity - Investors believe that their company is the initiator of the cooperation. Relatively least often their enterprise is indicated by respondents who selected contractors as the cooperating entity, this percentage is 21.4%, N = 3. Among respondents who chose customers as key stakeholders, the respondent's company is most often the initiator of a new relationship. In the case of respondents who chose Investors. However, the situation is different among the

respondents who indicated Contractors and Suppliers, because in this case they considered another company to be the initiator.

Table 99. Continuation collaboration/project - Customers Investors, Contractors, and Suppliers

Who usually initiates the continuation of the cooperation/project?	Customers		Investors		Contractors		Suppliers		Total	
My company	29	27.9%	9	42.9%	4	28.6%	5	38.5%	47	30.9%
The continued cooperation is the result of a joint initiative	46	44.2%	6	28.6%	4	28.6%	5	38.5%	61	40.1%
Key stakeholder	29	27.9%	6	28.6%	6	42.9%	3	23.1%	44	28.9%
Total	104	100.0%	21	100.0%	14	100.0%	13	100.0%	152	100.0%

Source: own study.

The highest percentage in the cross tabulation relates to the response in which respondents declare that the continuation of the cooperation is an initiative of both parties - 44.2%, N = 46, given by respondents who selected customers in question 9. The lowest percentage recorded was the response indicating a key stakeholder as initiating the continuation of the collaboration - 23.1%, N = 3 (see Table 99).

Table 100. Position - Customers, Investors, Contractors and Suppliers

How do you assess the position of your company during the negotiation/establishment of cooperation?	Customers		Investors		Contractors		Suppliers		Total	
Weak position	40	38.5%	5	23.8%	7	50.0%	5	38.5%	57	37.5%
The equal position of the two companies	41	39.4%	13	61.9%	4	28.6%	6	46.2%	64	42.1%
A strong position	23	22.1%	3	14.3%	3	21.4%	2	15.4%	31	20.4%
Total	104	100.0%	21	100.0%	14	100.0%	13	100.0%	152	100.0%

Source: own study.

Table 100 shows that respondents who chose investors as their main stakeholders the majority - 61.9%, N = 13 report that the negotiating position of the actors is equal. Within each group of respondents, the least numerous answers are a strong position. The answers that the company's position is the same or stronger outweigh the answers that the position is weaker. Therefore, it can be concluded that the respondents are aware of the position of strength of their enterprises. An interesting observation is the fact that enterprises that choose contractors as their main internal stakeholders feel their position is weaker in relation to this group of stakeholders.

Table 101. Initial objectives - Customers, Investors, Contractors and Suppliers

How often do you achieve the initial objectives set by your company before negotiations begin?	Customers		Investors		Contractors		Suppliers		Total	
Rarely or never	19	18.3%	5	23.8%	3	21.4%	4	30.8%	31	20.4%
In about half of the cases	49	47.1%	6	28.6%	6	42.9%	6	46.2%	67	44.1%
Often or always	36	34.6%	10	47.6%	5	35.7%	3	23.1%	54	35.5%
Total	104	100.0%	21	100.0%	14	100.0%	13	100.0%	152	100.0%

Source: own study.

Respondents who selected investors relatively most often - 42.9%, N = 6 believe that their company often or always achieves the objectives set at the beginning of negotiations. In the other groups, the most common answer is about half the time. Nevertheless, it is worth emphasizing that 79.6% of the respondents' answers indicated that the assumed arrangements were always, often or in half of the cases achieved at the end of the negotiations, which indicates a stronger position of the surveyed enterprises in interorganisational relations (see Table 101).

Table 102. Changing objectives - Customers, Investors, Contractors and Suppliers

How often do you change your objectives as a result of the actions of a key external stakeholder?	Customers	Investors	Contractors	Suppliers	Total

/ methods of operation / projected profits and costs?										
Rarely or never	36	34.6%	6	28.6%	6	42.9%	2	15.4%	50	32.9%
In about half of the cases	41	39.4%	8	38.1%	5	35.7%	6	46.2%	60	39.5%
Often or always	27	26.0%	7	33.3%	3	21.4%	5	38.5%	42	27.6%
Total	104	100.0%	21	100.0%	14	100.0%	13	100.0%	152	100.0%

Source: own study.

Each group of respondents relatively most often indicates the answer: "about half the time". The answer rarely or never appears most frequently in those respondents who mentioned contractors in question 9 - 42.9%. The answer often or always in respondents who selected suppliers as their main external stakeholder - 38.5%. Most respondents indicated that they rarely or never change the established assumptions in the case of a key external stakeholder, or only half of the time. This may also indicate the belief that they are in a position of power over other participants in the relationship (see Table 102).

Table 103. Negotiations - Customers, Investors, Contractors and Suppliers

What impact do your actions during the negotiation/cooperation have on the final outcome?	Customers		Investors		Contractors		Suppliers		Total	
Little or no impact	23	22.1%	1	4.8%	3	21.4%	2	15.4%	29	19.1%
Average impact	45	43.3%	12	57.1%	5	35.7%	3	23.1%	65	42.8%
High or full impact	36	34.6%	8	38.1%	6	42.9%	8	61.5%	58	38.2%
Total	104	100.0%	21	100.0%	14	100.0%	13	100.0%	152	100.0%

Source: own study.

Table 103 shows that in the question on influence on negotiations in the groups of respondents who indicated investors or suppliers as the main stakeholder, the frequencies for

one response category exceed 50%; investors - 57.1%, N = 12, medium influence: suppliers - 61.6%, N = 8, high or full influence. Respondents in all groups indicated little or no influence in the smallest percentages.

Table 104. Imposing own's will - Customers, Investors, Contractors and Suppliers

Does your company impose a certain way of doing things/its will?	Customers		Investors		Contractors		Suppliers		Total	
Rarely or never imposes its will	35	33.7%	9	42.9%	2	14.3%	4	30.8%	50	32.9%
Mostly imposes its will	44	42.3%	7	33.3%	7	50.0%	4	30.8%	62	40.8%
Often or always imposes its will	25	24.0%	5	23.8%	5	35.7%	5	38.5%	40	26.3%
Total	104	100.0%	21	100.0%	14	100.0%	13	100.0%	152	100.0%

Source: own study.

In the groups of respondents who selected customers or contractors in question 3, the highest percentages are those according to whom their company mostly imposes its will, respectively: 42.3%, N = 44 and 50.0%, N = 7. In the group of those who chose investors as the main stakeholder, the predominant percentages are those according to whom their company rarely or never imposes its will: 42.9%, N = 9. It is worth noting that the overwhelming number of responses, as many as 67.1%, indicate that their company always, often or mostly imposes its will, which also indicates a stronger position of the surveyed enterprises (see Table 104).

Table 105. Expectations - Customers, Investors, Contractors and Suppliers

Which entity is more in tune with the expectations of the other party?	Customers		Investors		Contractors		Suppliers		Total	
My company	21	20.2%	7	33.3%	0	-	2	15.4%	30	19.7%
Both companies jointly develop a consensus	41	39.4%	8	38.1%	8	57.1%	2	15.4%	59	38.8%
Key external stakeholder	42	40.4%	6	28.6%	6	42.9%	9	69.2%	63	41.4%
Total	104	100.0%	21	100.0%	14	100.0%	13	100.0%	152	100.0%

Source: own study.

None of the respondents who indicated contractors as a key stakeholders believe that their company adjusts to the expectations of the other party. At the same time, the highest percentage - taking into account all response categories by all groups - of respondents from this particular group believe that the actors develop consensus. The group of respondents who put contractors as the main stakeholder is clearly polarised. This question also clearly reveals the power asymmetry in interorganisational relations and it can be noted that it is not the enterprises that mainly meet the expectations of the other party, but usually the key stakeholder does, or they jointly develop a consensus (see Table 105).

Table 106. Benefits - Customers, Investors, Contractors and Suppliers

How often does your company receive additional benefits because of your negotiation/establishment activities?	Customers		Investors		Contractors		Suppliers		Total	
	Rarely or never	38	36.5%	9	42.9%	3	21.4%	6	46.2%	56
In about half of the cases	46	44.2%	9	42.9%	6	42.9%	4	30.8%	65	42.8%
Often or always	20	19.2%	3	14.3%	5	35.7%	3	23.1%	31	20.4%
Total	104	100.0%	21	100.0%	14	100.0%	13	100.0%	152	100.0%

Source: own study.

Table 106 shows that with similar frequency, respondents selected answers rarely or never as well as answers about half the time. Only in the group of respondents for whom contractors are the main stakeholders was the response to the question on additional benefits of negotiation or cooperation relatively least frequent - 21.4%.

Table 107. A key external stakeholder position - Customers, Investors, Contractors and Suppliers

How often does your company consider the position of a key external stakeholder when making business decisions?	Customers		Investors		Contractors		Suppliers		Total	
	Rarely or never	22	21.2%	2	9.5%	3	21.4%	5	38.5%	32

In about half of the cases	48	46.2%	11	52.4%	6	42.9%	5	38.5%	70	46.1%
Often or always	34	32.7%	8	38.1%	5	35.7%	3	23.1%	50	32.9%
Total	104	100.0%	21	100.0%	14	100.0%	13	100.0%	152	100.0%

Source: own study.

Respondents from all groups relatively most often, when asked about considering the position of a key external stakeholder in key business decisions, answered about half the time. Only the group of respondents that indicated suppliers with the same frequency indicated the answer rarely or never - 38.5% each, N = 5. However, this is the least numerous groups (see Table 107).

Table 108. Assets - Customers, Investors, Contractors and Suppliers

What property relationship I stand between your the company and a key external stakeholder?	Customers		Investors		Contractors		Suppliers		Total	
	Key external the stakeholder has less assets	27	26.0%	7	33.3%	7	50.0%	8	61.5%	49
Both sides have a similar wealth level	41	39.4%	7	33.3%	6	42.9%	3	23.1%	57	37.5%
Key external stakeholder owns more property	36	34.6%	7	33.3%	1	7.1%	2	15.4%	46	30.3%
Total	104	100.0%	21	100.0%	14	100.0%	13	100.0%	152	100.0%

Source: own study.

In the question on asset relationships, the responses of respondents who selected investors are distributed exactly in proportions of one-third for each response category. The weaker position of the key external stakeholder is indicated by respondents who selected contractors - 50.0%, N = 7 and investors - 61.5%, N = 8. The given question provides information that the assets of the surveyed companies' enterprises are usually greater or at a similar level than those of the key external stakeholder, and therefore the above-mentioned companies are also in a position of strength (see Table 108).

Table 109. Changing partners - Customers, Investors, Contractors and Suppliers

How often does the circle of actors with whom your company cooperates change?	Customers		Investors		Contractors		Suppliers		Total	
	Rarely or never	45	43.3%	7	33.3%	4	28.6%	3	23.1%	59
Sometimes	34	32.7%	7	33.3%	5	35.7%	4	30.8%	50	32.9%
Often or very often	25	24.0%	7	33.3%	5	35.7%	6	46.2%	43	28.3%
Total	104	100.0%	21	100.0%	14	100.0%	13	100.0%	152	100.0%

Source: own study.

Table 109 shows that the pattern of responses for respondents for whom the key external stakeholder is investors is even. In addition, a different response category prevails in each group, for those who selected customers in question 9 it is "rarely or never" - 43.3%, N = 45, suppliers - "often or very often" - 46.2%, N = 6. Among respondents who chose contractors, the answers "sometimes" and "often or very often" appear with equal frequency - 35.7%, N = 5. The least dynamic change in cooperation concerns respondents who opted for customers as key external stakeholders.

Table 110. Duration of cooperation - Customers, Investors, Contractors and Suppliers

For what period do your company's collaborations with a key external stakeholder usually last?	Customers		Investors		Contractors		Suppliers		Total	
	Less than 12 months	28	26.9%	9	42.9%	3	21.4%	6	46.2%	46
Over 12 months	76	73.1%	12	57.1%	11	78.6%	7	53.8%	106	69.7%
Total	104	100.0%	21	100.0%	14	100.0%	13	100.0%	152	100.0%

Source: own study.

Most respondents (irrespective of their preferred external stakeholder group) enter into cooperation agreements for longer than 12 months (see Table 110).

Table 111. Influence on duration of cooperation - Customers, Investors, Contractors and Suppliers

Who influences the duration of your company's partnerships with a key external stakeholder?	Customers		Investors		Contractors		Suppliers		Total	
Always my company	12	11.5%	1	4.8%	1	7.1%	0	-	14	9.2%
More often my company	24	23.1%	4	19.0%	3	21.4%	2	15.4%	33	21.7%
Both parties have a similar impact	48	46.2%	12	57.1%	8	57.1%	7	53.8%	75	49.3%
More often a key external stakeholder	20	19.2%	4	19.0%	2	14.3%	4	30.8%	30	19.7%
Total	104	100.0%	21	100.0%	14	100.0%	13	100.0%	152	100.0%

Source: own .

In each group of respondents, the percentage of declarations that both parties have similar influence prevails (see Table 111).

Table 112. Know-how - Customers, Investors, Contractors and Suppliers

Which entity uses/shares its know-how during the cooperation to achieve a common goal?	Customers		Investors		Contractors		Suppliers		Total	
More often or always my company	23	22.1%	5	23.8%	2	14.3%	2	15.4%	32	21.1%
Both parties make their know-how available to each other	51	49.0%	11	52.4%	6	42.9%	3	23.1%	71	46.7%
More often or always a key external stakeholder	30	28.8%	5	23.8%	6	42.9%	8	61.5%	49	32.2%
Total	104	100.0%	21	100.0%	14	100.0%	13	100.0%	152	100.0%

Source: own study.

When asked about sharing know-how with each other, in the groups of respondents who selected customers and investors, the answers about mutual sharing of know-how prevail, respectively - 49.0%, N = 51 and 52.4%, N = 11. In the group that indicated contractors at the same level are the answers about mutual sharing and the answer "more often or always a key external stakeholder" - 42.9%, N = 6. Respondents selecting suppliers more often in question 9 - 61.5%, N = 8 answered: "more often or always a key external stakeholder" (see Table 112).

Table 113. Sharing know-how - Customers, Investors, Contractors, and Suppliers

In relation to collaboration, does your company share its know-how with a key external stakeholder to enable them to benefit from it in the future?	Customers		Investors		Contractors		Suppliers		Total	
	Yes	27	26.0%	8	38.1%	7	50.0%	3	23.1%	45
Not	23	22.1%	6	28.6%	2	14.3%	8	61.5%	39	25.7%
It is difficult to identify	54	51.9%	7	33.3%	5	35.7%	2	15.4%	68	44.7%
Total	104	100.0%	21	100.0%	14	100.0%	13	100.0%	152	100.0%

Source: own study.

The chi-square independence test showed that there was a moderate relationship between the type of external stakeholder selected by the respondent and the answer to the question about sharing know-how: χ^2 (df = 6, N = 152) = 15.51; p = 0.014; V = 0.23. Respondents who named customers as a key stakeholder most often answered "Difficult to indicate" - 51.9%, N = 54. Those respondents who named investors or contractors most often answered in the affirmative - 38.1%, N = 8 and 50.0%, N = 3, respectively. Survey participants who named suppliers as key external stakeholders mostly answered in the negative - 61.5%, N = 8. Globally, respondents most often selected the answer "difficult to indicate" - 44.7%, N = 68 (see Table 113).

Table 114. Controlling actions of a key external stakeholder - Customers, Investors, Contractors and Suppliers

As part of the collaboration, does your company can control the actions of a key external stakeholder and correct their actions on an ongoing basis?	Customers		Investors		Contractors		Suppliers		Total	
	Yes	27	26.0%	11	52.4%	5	35.7%	5	38.5%	48
Not	25	24.0%	6	28.6%	7	50.0%	3	23.1%	41	27.0%
It is difficult to identify	52	50.0%	4	19.0%	2	14.3%	5	38.5%	63	41.4%

Total	104	100.0%	21	100.0%	14	100.0%	13	100.0%	152	100.0%
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Source: own study.

A chi-square test of independence indicates a moderate relationship between the choice of key external stakeholder and the answer to the question on the ability to control the actions of the key external stakeholder: χ^2 (df = 6, N = 152) = 14.26; p = 0.014; V = 0.22. Those for whom customers are a key external stakeholder half indicated the answer: "it is difficult to say", N = 52. More than half, 52.4%, N = 5 of the respondents who selected investors gave an affirmative answer. In contrast, half, N = 7 of the survey participants who preferred contractors selected an affirmative answer (see Table 114).

Table 115. Termination the relationship - Customers, Investors, Contractors and Suppliers

Which entity has the right to unilaterally break off cooperation or terminate a project without specific grounds?	Customers		Investors		Contractors		Suppliers		Total	
	My company	8	7.7%	2	9.5%	0	-	1	7.7%	11
Key external stakeholder	24	23.1%	5	23.8%	2	14.3%	3	23.1%	34	22.4%
Both entities shall have the right to unilaterally terminate the cooperation	60	57.7%	12	57.1%	11	78.6%	8	61.5%	91	59.9%
Neither entity shall have the right to unilaterally terminate cooperation	12	11.5%	2	9.5%	1	7.1%	1	7.7%	16	10.5%
Total	104	100.0%	21	100.0%	14	100.0%	13	100.0%	152	100.0%

Source: own study.

Table 115 shows that within each group of respondents, a clearly overwhelming proportion of responses (above 50%) relate to the category both entities have the right to unilaterally break the cooperation.

Table 116. Initiation of contract termination - Customers, Investors, Contractors and Suppliers

On whose initiative of entities how often does cooperation end?	Customers		Investors		Contractors		Suppliers		Total	
	My company	8	7.7%	2	9.5%	1	7.1%	2	15.4%	13
Key external stakeholder	35	33.7%	4	19.0%	8	57.1%	5	38.5%	52	34.2%
Cooperation ends by mutual agreement	61	58.7%	15	71.4%	5	35.7%	6	46.2%	87	57.2%
Total	104	100.0%	21	100.0%	14	100.0%	13	100.0%	152	100.0%

Source: own study.

Table 116 shows that the groups of respondents who selected customers, investors and suppliers in question 9 most often chose the option of consensual termination of cooperation, the percentages being respectively: 58.7%, N = 61, 71.4%, N = 15, 46.2%, N = 6. Only respondents selecting contractors mostly favoured the option of ending the collaboration on the initiative of a key external stakeholder - 57.1%, N = 8.

Table 117. Finding alternative contractors- Customers, Investors, Contractors and Suppliers

In your opinion, could contractors find a fully-fledged alternative to your services/goods in the short term (up to 3 months)?	Customers		Investors		Contractors		Suppliers		Total	
	Yes	13	12.5%	10	47.6%	3	21.4%	3	23.1%	29
No	34	32.7%	5	23.8%	8	57.1%	7	53.8%	54	35.5%
It is difficult to identify	57	54.8%	6	28.6%	3	21.4%	3	23.1%	69	45.4%
Total	104	100.0%	21	100.0%	14	100.0%	13	100.0%	152	100.0%

Source: own study.

There is a moderate relationship between the answer to the question on the ability of contractors to quickly find an alternative to the services of the company represented by the respondent and the external entity typed as the main stakeholder: χ^2 (df = 6, N = 152) = 22.13; p = 0.001; V = 0.27. The majority – 54.8%, N = 57, of the group of respondents who selected

customers have no opinion on this question. The majority of those in favour of contractors, as well as suppliers, chose the negative answer, respectively – 57.1%, N = 8, and 53.8%, N = 7. The affirmative answer was indicated most often by respondents who chose investors as their main stakeholders. In addition, the analysis of the frequency of responses presented in the previous chapter clearly showed a predominance of hard to indicate responses (see Table 117).

Table 118. Responsibility for the failure of the collaboration/project – Customers, Investors, Contractors and Suppliers

Which actor takes responsibility for the failure of the collaboration/project?	Customers		Investors		Contractors		Suppliers		Total	
My company	12	11.5%	2	9.5%	1	7.1%	1	7.7%	16	10.5%
Key external stakeholder	19	18.3%	4	19.0%	6	42.9%	3	23.1%	32	21.1%
Both companies share responsibility for failures	43	41.3%	14	66.7%	6	42.9%	8	61.5%	71	46.7%
None of the entities	30	28.8%	1	4.8%	1	7.1%	1	7.7%	33	21.7%
Total	104	100.0%	21	100.0%	14	100.0%	13	100.0%	152	100.0%

Source: own study.

Respondents from all groups are relatively most likely to declare that both companies jointly take responsibility for failures, with percentages exceeding 60% for investors and suppliers. In the group of respondents who identified contractors, the responses "both companies jointly take responsibility for failures " and "key external stakeholder " appear with equal frequency – 42.9%, N = 6 (see Table 118).

Table 119. Trust to key external stakeholder – Customers, Investors, Contractors, and Suppliers

Does your company have confidence in a key external stakeholder?	Customers		Investors		Contractors		Suppliers		Total	
No	15	14.4%	3	14.3%	4	28.6%	4	30.8%	26	17.1%
Yes	32	30.8%	8	38.1%	3	21.4%	5	38.5%	48	31.6%
Yes, but significantly reduced	40	38.5%	8	38.1%	4	28.6%	4	30.8%	56	36.8%

It is difficult to identify	17	16.3%	2	9.5%	3	21.4%	0	-	22	14.5%
Total	104	100.0%	21	100.0%	14	100.0%	13	100.0%	152	100.0%

Source: own study.

Across all groups, a response indicating limited trust in a key external stakeholder was relatively most common (see Table 119). Among respondents who indicated suppliers, the most frequent response was confirming unqualified trust – 38.5%, N = 5 and no responses indicating undecided. The result of the proportions test indicates that nearly half of the respondents declare that:

1. The initiative to continue cooperation lies with both sides – 44.2%, N = 46.
2. In about half of the cases, negotiating objectives are achieved – 47.1%, N = 49.
3. The influence of respondent's company on the activities undertaken during negotiations is medium – 43.3%, N = 45.
4. The respondent's companies predominantly imposes its will in its relationship with others – 42.3%, N = 44.
5. The key external stakeholder is more likely to align with the expectations of the other party – 40.4%, N = 42.
6. In about half of the cases, respondent's companies receive additional benefits from the collaboration – 44.2%, N = 46.
7. When making business decisions, in about half of the cases the respondent's company considers the position of a key external stakeholder – 46.2%, N = 48.
8. The circle of collaborators rarely or never changes – 43.3%, N = 45.
9. Collaborations with a duration of at least one year prevail – 73.1%, N = 76.
10. Both parties have a similar influence on the duration of the cooperation agreement – 46.2%.
11. During cooperation both parties share know-how with each other – 49.0%, N = 51.
12. The respondent's companies are not aware if other companies will use their know-how in the future – 51.9%, N = 54.
13. The respondent's companies has the ability to control the activities of a key external stakeholder – 50%, N = 52.

14. The respondent's companies are not aware if other parties will be able to source an equivalent service or product from another supplier at short notice – 54.8%, N = 57.
15. Both entities have the right to unilaterally terminate cooperation – 57.7%, N = 60.
16. Cooperation ends by mutual consent – 58.7%, N = 61.
17. Both companies share responsibility for failures – 41.3%, N = 43.

In summary, in the opinion of respondents who identified customers as a key stakeholder, stakeholder relationships are beneficial to their company, there is a balance or their entity is in a more favourable position. Survey participants have confidence in the key external stakeholder. At the same time, survey participants do not have knowledge about sharing their know-how with other entities, the possibility for other companies to use their know-how in the future, or knowledge about the possibility to control the activities of the collaborating stakeholder. Respondents also do not know whether contractors are able to quickly acquire an alternative to their service or goods. This ignorance is declared more often in this group of respondents than among respondents who selected key stakeholders among other external parties.

6.4. Development of a model for managing power asymmetry in interorganisational relations in the ICT sector in Poland

The starting point for the development of a model for managing power asymmetries in interorganisational relations in the ICT sector is the previously mentioned Stakeholder Saliency model (Mitchell et al. 1997). Considering that, as a result of a survey conducted on a group of 200 enterprises, the following stakeholders were identified as most important (Definitive Stakeholders) by the respondents: Customers, Investors, Contractors and Suppliers, the model to be developed will be build based on the ways of decisions and behaviours surveyed enterprises those who indicated the above definitive stakeholders in their survey.

The model indicated below is a mapping of the conduct of ICT enterprises. Based on the indicated model, the most important information on various areas of power asymmetry management in interorganisational relationships will be shown, including the identification of the key external stakeholder, the model behaviour in such a relationship, and the benefits of applying the company's behaviour to the model shown. The model shows how to act with other

stakeholders, which stakeholder enterprises focus on, which stakeholders' enterprises that employ 10 or more people consider the most important (Definitive Stakeholders) and how they create their relationship with these stakeholders. A detailed analysis of the behaviour of the surveyed enterprises from the ICT sector in Poland, which was presented in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6, allowed the following conclusions to be drawn.

Statistically significant relationships occurred and are the most visible for three questions. Answer the first question, which is as follows: In relation to collaboration, does your company share its know-how with a key external stakeholder to enable them to benefit from it in the future? More than half – 61.5% - of respondents who selected suppliers as key stakeholders answered in the negative to this question, 50% of respondents who indicated contractors answered in the affirmative, and 51.9% of those preferring customers had no opinion. It is worth noting that the frequency analysis carried out only for the respondents who indicated customers as the main stakeholders for this question indicated significant differences in the numbers of responses within this group of respondents and with a clear predominance of difficult to indicate responses. The answer to the second question "Does your cooperative enterprise have the ability to control the actions of a key external stakeholder and correct their actions on an ongoing basis?" relates to the external entity typified as a key stakeholder. Respondents selecting customers relatively indicated an answer of "it is difficult to say ", these respondents who indicated investors as key stakeholders answered "yes " and those who picked contractors as a key stakeholders choose "no ". Response to the third question: in your opinion, could contractors find a fully-fledged alternative to your services/goods within a short period of time (up to 3 months)? This is also related to the type of external entity indicated by the respondent as the main stakeholder. Those indicating customers are overwhelmingly undecided, those indicating contractors and suppliers deny that contractors have this option. Only respondents opting for investors are relatively often of the opinion that partners can quickly find an alternative to their company's services.

The summaries obtained in many cases proved to be interesting, in such a way that I can point the way forward for the exploration of the research subject. Below are interesting areas of exploration for further research: Respondents in all groups relatively rarely rate their company's negotiating position as very strong, yet they believe their actions have an impact on the outcome of negotiations. Respondents who selected customers as a key stakeholder are characterised by relatively low dynamics of change in co-operation with other stakeholders. Respondents who selected investors as key stakeholders mostly – 61.9%, N = 13 believe that

their company is the initiator of cooperation, relatively often – 42.9% believe that their company initiates the continuation of cooperation, in most – 61.9%, N = 13 report, that the negotiating position of the actors is equal, relatively most often – 42.9%, N = 6 consider that their enterprise often or always achieves the objectives set at the beginning of the negotiation, in the question about the influence of the activities of their enterprise on the course of the negotiation 57.1% report "medium influence ". Respondents who selected contractors as key stakeholders in half cases – 50% (N = 7) – believe that their company’s negotiating position is weak, the highest percentage for this response category among all respondent groups. No one in this group believes that their company adjusts to the expectations of the other party, with a majority of 57.1% believing that the actors develop consensus. Respondents who selected suppliers as key stakeholders, when asked about the impact of their company’s activities on the negotiation process, 61.5% picked high or full impact.

Based on the analysis of the above dependencies and the dependencies demonstrated in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6, it is my opinion that the model for managing power asymmetry by managing the definitive stakeholders should take the following form (see Table 120).

Table 120. Model of managing the power asymmetry in the ICT sector in Poland

Key external stakeholder How to behave in a given situation	Customers	Investors	Contractors	Suppliers
Who should be the initiator of new collaborations?	C	C	K	K
Who should be the initiator of continuing cooperation?	JI	C	K	JI
Upon whom do the initial targets depend?	C	C	JI	C
Upon whom does the negotiating position depend?	JI	JI	K	JI
Who should change objectives as a result of pressure?	K	JI	K	JI
Who has the greatest influence in establishing cooperation on the end result?	C	C	C	C
Who should impose their will?	C	JI	C	C
Who decides when making business decisions?	JI	JI	JI	JI
Who possesses more wealth?	E	E	SP	SP

Who should decide which actors the company cooperates with?	C	JI	JI	JI
What is the period of time for which partnerships should be set up?	LT	LT	LT	LT
Who should use their know-how to achieve the desired goals?	C	C	C	C
Whose responsibility should it be to keep the know-how secret?	C	JI	K	C
Who should control or correct the partner's actions?	JI	C	K	C
Who should strive for a good relationship in the short term?	JI	C	K	K
From which side should there be more trust for the success of the cooperation?	C	C	JI	C
Who is responsible for the failure of the cooperation?	JI	JI	K	JI

ICT company = C; Key external stakeholder = K; Joint initiative = JI; Same position = E, Stronger position of ICT company = SP; Weaker position of the ICT company = WP; Long term = LT, Short term = ST.

Source: own study.

A company that has chosen Customers as its Definitive Stakeholder can apply the following behaviour, which is used by most companies employing 10 or more people in the ICT sector and considering customers as the most important stakeholder in their companies.

1. The ICT company should be the initiator of a new collaboration and its continuation should be the result of a joint initiative.
2. The ICT enterprise should strive to achieve its pre-negotiation baseline objectives, since its position is mostly the same as that of the key stakeholder and it should not change its objectives or ways of working as a result of pressure from an external key stakeholder.
3. The ICT enterprise should actively participate in the negotiation, as its influence is important for the outcome of the negotiation.
- 4 The ICT enterprise should impose its will on the key external stakeholder to influence its actions.

5. The ICT enterprise should not conform to the expectations of the key external stakeholder but should take into account the position of the key external stakeholder.
6. The ICT enterprise takes into account the position of the key external stakeholder in making business decisions in about half of the cases because they have the same assets.
7. The ICT enterprise should not frequently change the circle of stakeholders with whom it works.
8. The ICT enterprise should establish long-term partnerships with other entities.
9. The ICT enterprise should use its know-how to achieve its intended results, but should be cautious in sharing its know-how to limit the negative effects of its use by others in the future.
10. The ICT enterprise should try to control the actions of a key external stakeholder and correct its actions on an ongoing basis.
11. The ICT enterprise should limit the possibility of its counterparties finding alternatives to its services/goods in the short term.
12. The ICT enterprise must have confidence in the key external stakeholder, as both enterprises jointly take responsibility for the failure of the cooperation.

A company that has chosen Investors as its Definitive Stakeholder can apply the following behaviour, which is used by most companies employing 10 or more people in the ICT sector and considering Investors as the most important stakeholder in their companies.

1. The ICT enterprise should be the initiator of the new cooperation and the continuation should be the result of its initiative.
2. The ICT enterprise should strive to achieve its pre-negotiation baseline objectives, as its position is mostly the same as that of the key stakeholder, but change its objectives as a result of pressure from the external key stakeholder.
3. The ICT enterprise should actively participate in the negotiation, as its influence is important for the outcome of the negotiation.
4. The ICT enterprise should not impose its will on a key external stakeholder to influence its actions.
5. The ICT enterprise should not conform to the expectations of a key external stakeholder, but should take into account the position of the key external stakeholder.

6. The ICT enterprise takes into account the position of the key external stakeholder when making business decisions in about half of the cases because they have the same assets.
7. The ICT enterprise should sometimes change the circle of stakeholders it works with.
8. The ICT enterprise should establish long-term partnerships with other entities.
9. The ICT enterprise should use its know-how to achieve the intended results and can share its know-how with the key stakeholder.
10. The ICT enterprise should always monitor the actions of the key external stakeholder and correct them on an ongoing basis.
11. The ICT enterprise should very much limit the possibility of its counterparties finding alternatives to its services/goods in the short term.
12. The ICT enterprise must have confidence in the key external stakeholder, as both enterprises jointly take responsibility for the failure of the cooperation.

A company that has chosen Contractors as its Definitive Stakeholder can apply the following behaviour, which is used by most companies employing 10 or more people in the ICT sector and considering Contractors as the most important stakeholder in their companies.

1. The key stakeholder should be the initiator of the new collaboration and the continuation should be the result of the initiative of the company's key stakeholder.
2. The ICT enterprise may change its pre-negotiation baseline objectives during the negotiation process, although its position is generally weaker than that of the key stakeholder but should not change its objectives as a result of pressure from an external key stakeholder.
3. The ICT enterprise should actively participate in the negotiation, as its influence is important for the outcome of the negotiation.
4. The ICT enterprise should impose its will on the key external stakeholder to influence its actions.
5. The ICT enterprise should not conform to the expectations of the key external stakeholder but should take into account the position of the key external stakeholder.
6. The ICT enterprise takes into account the position of a key external stakeholder when making business decisions about half of the time because they have fewer assets.
7. The ICT enterprise should sometimes change the circle of stakeholders it works with.

8. The ICT enterprise should establish long-term partnerships with other entities.
9. The ICT enterprise should use its know-how to achieve the intended results and can share its know-how with the key stakeholder.
10. The ICT enterprise should not be able to control the actions of a key external stakeholder and correct its actions on an ongoing basis.
11. The ICT enterprise should not be concerned about the possibility of its counterparties finding alternatives to its services/goods in the short term.
12. The ICT enterprise should have confidence in the key external stakeholder, as both enterprises jointly take responsibility for the failure of the cooperation, although the key external stakeholder somewhat more.

A company that has chosen Suppliers as its Definitive Stakeholder can apply the following behaviour, which is used by most companies employing 10 or more people in the ICT sector and considering Suppliers as the most important stakeholder in their companies.

1. The key stakeholder should be the initiator of the new collaboration and continuation should be the result of the initiative of that company or key stakeholder.
2. The ICT enterprise should strive to achieve its pre-negotiation baseline targets, as its position is mostly the same as that of the key stakeholder and may change its targets due to pressure from the external key stakeholder.
3. The ICT enterprise should actively participate in the negotiation, as its influence is important for the outcome of the negotiation.
4. The ICT enterprise should impose its will on the key external stakeholder to influence its actions.
5. The ICT enterprise should not conform to the expectations of the key external stakeholder, and should take into account the position of the key external stakeholder.
6. The ICT enterprise takes into account the position of a key external stakeholder in making business decisions in about half of the cases, because it has fewer assets.
7. The ICT enterprise should sometimes change the circle of stakeholders with whom it works.
8. The ICT enterprise should establish long-term partnerships with other entities.
9. The ICT enterprise should use its know-how to achieve its intended results, while it should not share its know-how to limit the negative effects of its use by others in the future.

10. The ICT enterprise should be able to control the actions of a key external stakeholder and correct its actions on an ongoing basis.

11. The ICT enterprise should not be concerned about the possibility of its counterparties finding alternatives to its services/goods in the short term.

12. The ICT enterprise should have confidence in the key external stakeholder, as both enterprises jointly take responsibility for the failure of the cooperation.

There are limitations associated with the use of a particular model, as it can only be used under certain conditions. Firstly, it is targeted at companies in the ICT sector in Poland. Secondly, it takes into account the relationships with specific key stakeholders, i.e. customers, investors, contractors and suppliers. Thirdly, it describes the behaviour of enterprises that employ 10 or more people, so it would be best to apply the model to enterprises employing a similar number of people, although the application of the model to smaller enterprises is not excluded.

6.5. Summary

This chapter aimed to answer an additional research question (SRQ6): Is it possible to build a model of managing the power asymmetry in the interorganisational relationships in the ICT sector in Poland? The answer was related to the supporting objective (SRO6) of an attempt to build a model of power asymmetry in interorganisational relations in the ICT sector in Poland. The additional question was closely linked to the main research question: What form should the model of managing the power asymmetry in the interorganisational relationships in the ICT sector in Poland take? Formulating an answer to the last research question and previous ones helped to achieve the main objective of the doctoral dissertation to identify the state of power asymmetry and an attempt to build a model of managing the power asymmetry in the interorganisational relationships in the ICT sector in Poland.

A study was conducted on a group of 200 enterprises in Poland's ICT sector that employ 10 or more people. The study focused on the involvement of experts performing managerial functions and achieved a response rate of 100%. This indicates the significance and usefulness of the study. An exemplary model for managing power asymmetry in interorganisational relations in the ICT sector in Poland was created. Based on the indicated model, the most

important information on various areas of power asymmetry management in interorganisational relationships will be shown, including the identification of the key external stakeholder. The model shows how to manage stakeholders and which stakeholders consider the most important (Definitive Stakeholders) and how they create their relationship with these stakeholders.

A model of managing the power asymmetry in the interorganisational relationships in the ICT sector in Poland has been developed. This model provides theoretical, methodological and practical value and may offer an original solution to a scientific problem. The main goal of this chapter, the construction of the proposed model, has been achieved. At this stage of the research, the main objective of the doctoral dissertation can be considered fully accomplished.

CONCLUSION

The scientific problem addressed in this dissertation was **the lack of research on power asymmetry in interorganisational relations in the ICT sector in Poland and, consequently, the lack of possibilities to manage it in this sector**. This problem was operationalised on the basis of management and quality sciences in the form of the following research question **What form should the model of managing the power asymmetry in the interorganisational relationships in the ICT sector in Poland take?** In response to this question, this dissertation proposes a unique solution to a scientific problem. In order to answer the main research question, I had to answer six additional questions. The doctoral dissertation presented the answer to each question in six chapters, with each chapter addressing one additional question.

The main question indicated the main objective of this dissertation, which was to identify the state of power asymmetry and to attempt to build a model of managing power asymmetry in interorganisational relationships in the ICT sector in Poland. Apart from the main objective, I have answered six research objectives.

Chapter 1, which focuses on how the building of interorganisational relationships affects the achievement of organisational goals. As noted by A. L. Friedman and S. Miles (2006), stakeholder management is essentially stakeholder relationships management as it is the relationship and not the actual stakeholder groups that are managed. Identifying processes that take place inside or outside an organisation can be challenging. It should be emphasised that organisations often choose cooperation strategies with other entities that are part of their environment. Through these collaborative processes, integration between organisations takes place, blurring organisational boundaries. Interorganisational cooperation is primarily motivated by the achievement of synergies and access to resources. The aim is to improve the efficiency and performance of the organisations involved through cooperation. Therefore, in 2019, interorganisational relationships were added as a new topic area within the sub-discipline of strategic management (Bełz et al., 2019). The first research objective has thus been achieved.

Chapter 2 established that the determinants of power asymmetry in interorganisational relationships relate to the ability to exercise control or power over resources or another organisation. Establishing an interorganisational relationship requires sacrificing freedom and autonomy in decision-making in favour of shared decision-making. On the one hand, an organisation wants to fully control its decisions, on the other hand, it is reluctant to give up

control to another organisation, which implies an asymmetric picture of the decision to create interorganisational interactions. Thus, the second research objective was met.

In Chapter 3 through the systematic literature review showed that power asymmetry is a multifaceted and complex research topic and that considerations of stakeholder theory in the context of asymmetry lead to interesting conclusions. The review also suggests that firms compete for advantage by operating in the technology domain, persuading stakeholders to adopt their technology and join them in a common business model, and attempting to manage this relationship. Technology transfer enables the creation of joint projects and thus strengthens interorganisational relationships. In this chapter I have explained and described the methods and benefits of power asymmetry management and stakeholder relationship management in ICT companies. The third research objective has thus been achieved.

Chapter 4 of this dissertation was to determine how to select stakeholder groups in the ICT sector and identify assumptions for modelling interorganisational relationships. An attempt to build a model of power asymmetries in interorganisational relations in the ICT sector was taken as the main objective of the dissertation. After an extensive review of the literature on the subject, I decided that, for the purposes of this dissertation, by model I meant a mapping, through the representation of certain characteristics of an object, in order to study the object in question. Thus, the fourth research objective was achieved.

Chapter 5 the results of the survey. The most important stakeholders in the ICT sector were identified, with respondents identifying Shareholders, Owners, Employees and management as the most important internal stakeholders. In contrast, Customers, Investors, Contractors and Suppliers were considered the most important external stakeholders. The questions in the survey covered also the issue of stakeholders' attitudes towards the functioning of the organisation, as well as the particular relationships resulting from the organisation's interaction with key external stakeholders. The conclusion of this chapter is that there is a power asymmetry in interorganisational relations in ICT enterprises in Poland. The enterprise being interviewed typically has more assets than the main stakeholder, and it is the main external stakeholder who adapts to the expectations of the enterprise. When asked about the imposition of a certain way of doing things, 145 respondents answered that their company usually, often, or always imposes its will, indicating an asymmetry in this sector. The objective mentioned in this chapter has been achieved and identified power asymmetry in ICT companies in Poland based on survey data analysis enabled me to construct a model in Chapter 6. Moreover, the response to the auxiliary question presented in this chapter has enabled me to partially address

the main objective of this doctoral dissertation, which was to identify the state of power asymmetry in interorganisational relationships within the ICT sector in Poland. Thus, the fifth research objective has been achieved.

Chapter 6 presented a model for managing power asymmetry in interorganisational relations in the ICT sector in Poland. The presented model shows how to manage power asymmetry in interorganisational relations in the ICT sector in Poland. The study was conducted on a group of 200 companies in the Polish ICT sector with 10 or more employees. Thus, the sixth research objective has been achieved.

The presented dissertation proposes a mapping model with a morphological model shape (see Table 120) for managing power asymmetry in the ICT sector in Poland. In view of the above, the dissertation has achieved the main objective of the work, which was to create a model, and has solved the considered scientific problem.

The created model of power asymmetry management in interorganisational relations in the ICT sector in Poland offered an original solution to a scientific problem. The originality of the solution to the scientific problem has its source in the knowledge presented in the individual parts of the dissertation and results from the added value that this dissertation brings to the theoretical, methodological and practical areas of management and quality sciences.

Theoretical value of the study stems from examining the ICT sector in Poland and interorganisational relations from the perspective of enterprises, and further formulating these studied relations as a model. Such a model, while representing empirical realm on its own, fosters creation of theory regarding interorganisational relations, as part of strategic management sub-discipline. The information and analysis presented in this dissertation can serve as a basis for further research. Further areas of research that can be undertaken by subsequent researchers include 1) developing the presented model to include other external stakeholders, 2) extending the research to companies with less than 10 employees, 3) conducting research on the management of power asymmetry in interorganisational relations in other sectors of the economy, 4) creating a comparative model in the ICT sector of another country.

The methodological value is predicated on adaptation of well-established methods to form original research tool – i.e., morphological modelling based on survey results. It is through this tool, that the sample was studied to deliver results in a target population. This tool might be further enhanced and adopted for future studies.

Conducting research in this way would add to the body of knowledge on power asymmetry, how it is managed and how interorganisational relations are shaped, thus making an important contribution to management and quality sciences.

The practical value of the model created should be highlighted, as it can be easily adapted by managers of ICT companies, among others. It demonstrates its accessibility by directly indicating the direction of interaction creation given the circumstances and the key external stakeholders. As economic growth is increasingly predicated on the development of the ICT sector, the created model might provide substantial help to the decision-makers in developing policies at national level, that would contribute to enhancing the position of Polish companies.

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APPENDIX 1 - SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE



UNIWERSYTET
EKONOMICZNY
W KRAKOWIE

DEPARTMENT OF STRATEGIC ANALYSIS
KRAKOW UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS
BUILDING B, RAKOWICKA 27 STREET
31- 510 KRAKÓW

Dear Participant,

I would like to thank you for your participation in this study. As a reminder, the purpose of this study is to investigate power asymmetry in interorganisational relations in the information and communication technology sector in Poland. The data collected through interviews will contribute to a better understanding of this phenomenon. The survey takes about 20 minutes to complete.

Please remember that any data relating to you as an individual participant will be kept confidential. Once all the data for this project has been collected and analysed, I plan to share this information with the research community through conferences, presentations and journal articles. If you are interested in receiving more information about the results of this study, or if you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at either the phone number or email address listed at the bottom of the page. If you would like to receive a summary of the results, please let me know now by giving me your email address. I will send it to you when the study is complete. The study is expected to be completed by November 2023.

Klaudia Bracio-Golec

PhD Candidate

Department of Strategic Analysis

Krakow University of Economics

d1423@student.uek.krakow.pl

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RESEARCH SURVEY

Date of completion

Part 1. Stakeholder research

1. Who has the ability to influence your company's actions and decisions? (Please put an X in the appropriate box - multiple choice)

Internal stakeholders:

- Employees
- Owners
- Shareholders/Shareholders
- Supervisory boards
- Project manager
- Members of the project team
- Project portfolio manager and/or program manager
- Project sponsor
- Managers
- Other..... (please fill in)

External stakeholders:

- Customers
- Suppliers
- Contractors
- Subcontractors
- Users
- Investors
- Competitors
- State authorities
- Financial institutions
- Local institutions
- Media
- Trade Associations
- Other..... (please fill in)

2. Which entity has a strong influence on your company? (Please put an X in the appropriate box - multiple choice question, multiple answer options)

Internal stakeholders:

- Employees
- Owners
- Shareholders/Shareholders
- Supervisory boards
- Project manager
- Members of the project team

- Project portfolio manager and/or program manager
- Project sponsor
- Managers
- Other..... (please fill in)

External stakeholders:

- Customers
- Suppliers
- Contractors
- Subcontractors
- Users
- Investors
- Competitors
- State authorities
- Financial institutions
- Local institutions
- Media
- Trade Associations
- Other..... (please fill in)

3. Which entity has little influence on your company? (please put an X in the appropriate box - multiple choice question, multiple answer options)

Internal stakeholders:

- Employees
- Owners
- Shareholders/Shareholders
- Supervisory boards
- Project manager
- Members of the project team
- Project portfolio manager and/or program manager
- Project sponsor
- Managers
- Other..... (please fill in)

External stakeholders:

- Customers
- Suppliers
- Contractors
- Subcontractors
- Users
- Investors
- Competitors
- State authorities
- Financial institutions
- Local institutions
- Media
- Trade Associations
- Other..... (please fill in)

4. Which entity has an interest in the operation/success of your business? (Please put an X in the appropriate box - multiple choice question, multiple answer options)

Internal stakeholders:

- Employees
- Owners
- Shareholders/Shareholders
- Supervisory boards
- Project manager
- Members of the project team
- Project portfolio manager and/or program manager
- Project sponsor
- Managers
- Other..... (please fill in)

External stakeholders:

- Customers
- Suppliers
- Contractors
- Subcontractors
- Users
- Investors
- Competitors
- State authorities
- Financial institutions
- Local institutions
- Media
- Trade Associations
- Other..... (please fill in)

5. Which entity is not interested in the operation /success of your company? (Please put an X in the appropriate box - multiple choice question, multiple answer options)

Internal stakeholders:

- Employees
- Owners
- Shareholders/Shareholders
- Supervisory boards
- Project manager
- Members of the project team
- Project portfolio manager and/or program manager
- Project sponsor
- Managers
- Other..... (please fill in)

External stakeholders:

- Customers
- Suppliers
- Contractors
- Subcontractors
- Users
- Investors
- Competitors
- State authorities

- Financial institutions
- Local institutions
- Media
- Trade Associations
- Other..... (please fill in)

6. Which entity has a positive attitude towards your company? (Please put an X in the appropriate box - multiple choice question, multiple answer options)

Internal stakeholders:

- Employees
- Owners
- Shareholders/Shareholders
- Supervisory boards
- Project manager
- Members of the project team
- Project portfolio manager and/or program manager
- Project sponsor
- Managers
- Other..... (please fill in)

External stakeholders:

- Customers
- Suppliers
- Contractors
- Subcontractors
- Users
- Investors
- Competitors
- State authorities
- Financial institutions
- Local institutions
- Media
- Trade Associations
- Other..... (please fill in)

7. Which entity has a negative attitude towards your company? (Please put an X in the appropriate box - multiple choice question, multiple answer options)

Internal stakeholders:

- Employees
- Owners
- Shareholders/Shareholders
- Supervisory boards
- Project manager
- Members of the project team
- Project portfolio manager and/or program manager
- Project sponsor
- Managers
- Other..... (please fill in)

External stakeholders:

- Customers
- Suppliers

- Contractors
- Subcontractors
- Users
- Investors
- Competitors
- State authorities
- Financial institutions
- Local institutions
- Media
- Trade Associations
- Other..... (please fill in)

8. Do you tailor your company's activities to the interests of which entity? (Please put an X in the appropriate box - multiple choice question, multiple answer options)

Internal stakeholders:

- Employees
- Owners
- Shareholders/Shareholders
- Supervisory boards
- Project manager
- Members of the project team
- Project portfolio manager and/or program manager
- Project sponsor
- Managers
- Other..... (please fill in)

External stakeholders:

- Customers
- Suppliers
- Contractors
- Subcontractors
- Users
- Investors
- Competitors
- State authorities
- Financial institutions
- Local institutions
- Media
- Trade Associations
- Other..... (please fill in)

9. Which of the external stakeholders, in your opinion, is the key/most important stakeholder for your company? (Please put an X in the appropriate box - single-choice question)

- Customers
- Suppliers
- Contractors
- Subcontractors
- Users

- Investors
- Competitors
- State authorities
- Financial institutions
- Local institutions
- Media
- Trade Associations
- Other..... (please fill in)

Part 2. Research on relationships - please provide answers regarding the relationship with the entity you indicated in the answer to question no. 9 (hereinafter: "key external stakeholder").

10. Who usually initiates new cooperation/projects? (Please put an X in the appropriate box single-choice question)

- My company
- Key external stakeholder
- The cooperation is the result of a joint initiative

11. Who usually initiates the continuation of the cooperation/project? (Please put an X in the appropriate box - single-choice question)

- My company
- Key external stakeholder
- Continued cooperation is the result of a joint initiative

12. How do you rate your company's position in the negotiation/establishment of the cooperation? (please rate by putting an X in the appropriate box according to the given scale: 1 - weak position, 5 - strong position)

- 1 weak position
- 2 a slightly weaker position than the key external stakeholder
- 3 equal position of both companies
- 4 not much stronger than the key external stakeholder
- 5 strong position

13. How often do you achieve the initial objectives your company set before entering into negotiations? (please rate by putting an X in the appropriate box according to the given scale: 1 – never, 5 – always)

- 1 never
- 2 rarely
- 3 in about half the cases
- 4 often
- 5 always

- 14. How often do you change your objectives/methods/projected profits and costs as a result of the actions of a key external stakeholder? (please rate by putting an X in the appropriate box according to the given scale: 1 – never, 5 – always)**
- 1 never
 - 2 rarely
 - 3 in about half the cases
 - 4 often
 - 5 always
- 15. What impact do your actions taken during negotiations/establishing cooperation have on the final result? (please rate by putting an X in the appropriate box according to the given scale: 1 - no impact on the final result, 5 - full impact on the final result)**
- 1 no effect
 - 2 little impact
 - 3 medium impact
 - 4 major impact
 - 5 full impact
- 16. Does your company impose a specific course of action/its will? (please rate by putting an X in the appropriate box according to the given scale: 1 - the company never imposes its will, 5 - the company fully imposes its will)**
- 1 The company never imposes its will
 - 2 the company rarely imposes its will
 - 3, the company usually imposes its will
 - 4 the company often imposes its will
 - 5 the company always imposes its will
- 17. Which entity adapts more to the expectations of the other party? (Please put an X in the appropriate box - single-choice question)**
- My company
 - Key external stakeholder
 - Both companies work together to develop a consensus
- 18. How often does your company receive additional benefits as a result of your activities during negotiations/collaboration? (please rate by putting an X in the appropriate box according to the given scale: 1 – never, 5 – always)**
- 1 never
 - 2 rarely
 - 3 in about half the cases
 - 4 often
 - 5 always
- 19. How often does your company take into account the position of a key external stakeholder when making business decisions? (please rate by putting an X in the appropriate box according to the given scale: 1 – never, 5 – always)**
- 1 never
 - 2 rarely

- 3 in about half the cases
 - 4 often
 - 5 always
- 20. What is the ownership relationship between your company and a key external stakeholder? (please rate by putting an X in the appropriate box appropriate field - single-choice question)**
- The key external stakeholder almost always has less wealth
 - A key external stakeholder is more likely to have less wealth
 - Both parties have a similar level of wealth
 - A key external stakeholder is more likely to have greater wealth
 - A key external stakeholder almost always has more wealth
- 21. How often does the group of entities with which your company cooperates change? (please rate by putting an X in the appropriate box according to the given scale: 1 - does not change, 5 - very often)**
- 1 does not change or they are very rare
 - 2 rarely
 - 3 sometimes
 - 4 often
 - 5 very often
- 22. What is the typical duration of a relationship between your company and a key external stakeholder? (please rate by putting an X in the appropriate box appropriate field - single-choice question)**
- Less than 12 months
 - Over 12 months
- 23. Who influences the length of time your company works with a key external stakeholder? (please rate by putting an X in the appropriate box appropriate field - single-choice question)**
- Always my company
 - More often my enterprise
 - Both sides have similar influence
 - More often a key external stakeholder
 - Always a key external stakeholder
- 24. During cooperation, which entity uses/shares its know-how to achieve a common goal? (Please put an X in the appropriate box - single-choice question)**
- Always my company
 - More often my company
 - Both parties share their know-how with each other
 - More often a key external stakeholder
 - Always a key external stakeholder
- 25. Does your company share its know-how with a key external stakeholder as part of the cooperation, so that this stakeholder can benefit from it in the future? (Please put an X in the appropriate box - single-choice question)**
- Yes

- No
 - It's hard to pinpoint
- 26. As part of the cooperation, does your company have the ability to control the activities of a key external stakeholder and correct their actions on an ongoing basis? (Please put an X in the appropriate box - single-choice question)**
- Yes
 - No
 - It's hard to pinpoint
- 27. Which entity has the right to unilaterally terminate cooperation or end the project without any specific reason? (Please put an X in the appropriate box - single-choice question)**
- My company
 - Key external stakeholder
 - Both entities have the right to unilaterally terminate cooperation
 - None of the entities has the right to unilaterally terminate cooperation
- 28. On the initiative of which entity does cooperation most often end? (Please put an X in the appropriate box - single-choice question)**
- My company
 - A key external stakeholder
 - Cooperation ends by mutual consent
- 29. Do you think your contractors could find a legitimate alternative to your services/goods in a short period of time (up to 3 months)? (Please put an X in the appropriate box - single-choice question)**
- Yes
 - No
 - It's hard to pinpoint
- 30. Which entity takes responsibility for the failure of the cooperation/project? (Please put an X in the appropriate box - single-choice question)**
- My company
 - Key external stakeholder
 - Both companies share responsibility for failures
 - None of the entities
- 31. Does your company trust a key external stakeholder? (Please put an X in the appropriate box - single-choice question)**
- Yes
 - No
 - Yes, but significantly limited
 - It's hard to pinpoint

Part 3. Demographic information

32. Please indicate in which section of the Polish Classification of Economic Activities (PKD 2007) the main activities of your company can be classified. (please put an X in the appropriate field - single choice question; if you choose "No", please indicate the section that describes your company's activities)

- Section 26 of the PKD – production of computers, electronic and optical products
- Section 58 of the PKD – publishing activities
- Section 61 of the PKD – telecommunications activities
- Section 62 of the PKD – activities related to software and IT consulting and related activities
- Section 63 of the PKD – information service activities
- Section 95 of the PKD - repair and maintenance of computers and personal and household goods
- No, the main activities of my company are described in the section: PKD

33. Number of persons employed in your company: (please put an X in the appropriate field - multiple choice question)

- Up to 9 employees
- 10 – 49 employees
- 50 – 249 employees
- 250 – 999 employees
- 1,000 or more employees

34. How many years has your company been in business? (please put an X in the appropriate field - single-choice question)

- 1-2 years
- 3-5 years
- 6-9 years old
- 10-20 years
- 21 years and over

35. What is the origin of your company's capital? (please put an X in the appropriate field - single-choice question)

- 100% Polish capital
- 50% and more, but less than 100% of Polish capital
- below 50% of Polish capital
- 0% Polish capital

36. What is the legal form of your company? (please put an X in the appropriate field - single-choice question; if you choose the "Other form" option, please enter the legal form of your business)

- Joint-stock company
- Private Limited company
- Limited partnership
- General partnership
- partnership

- State-owned enterprise
 - Other form.....(please enter)
- 37. What form of ownership is your company? (please put an X in the appropriate field - single-choice question)**
- Private
 - State
- 38. What is the nature of your company's activities? (please put an X in the appropriate field - single-choice question)**
- Operation 100% under its own commercial brand
 - 100% activity at the request of customers, sales under someone else's brand
 - Mixed activities under your own and other people's brands (percentage of activities under your own brand..... and activities under someone else's brand.....)
- 39. Does your company carry out research and development activities? (please put an X in the appropriate field - single-choice question)**
- Yes
 - No
 - It's hard to pinpoint
- 40. What is the geographical coverage of your company's products/services? (please put an X in the appropriate field - single-choice question)**
- Local (district and possibly surrounding counties)
 - Regional (area of the entire voivodeship)
 - Nationwide (coverage of the entire country)
 - International (at least one country outside Poland)
- 41. What is your company's annual revenue? (please put an X in the appropriate field - single-choice question)**
- Up to 50 thousand PLN
 - 51 – 200 thousand PLN
 - 201 thousand PLN – PLN 1 million
 - PLN 1 – 5 million
 - PLN 5 – 20 million
 - Over PLN 20 million
- 42. What is your position in the company? (please put an X in the appropriate field - single-choice question)**
- Owner
 - Partner
 - Member of the Board
 - Managing director
 - Manager
 - Managerial employee in the ICT sector
 - Other (please fill in)

43. How long have you worked for the company? (please put an X in the appropriate field - single-choice question)

- 0-2 years
- 3-5 years
- 6-9 years old
- 10 years and more

44. Please provide the gender of the respondent. (please put an X in the appropriate field - single-choice question; if you select "Other", please enter your gender)

- Woman
- Man
- I don't want to answer
- Other..... (please fill in)

Your comments and observations on the topics covered in the survey

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Thank you for participating in the survey and your time.