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**Kornelija Sinkevičienė**

***MASTER'S THESIS***

<b>PROJEKTO VADOVO PRAKTIKOS VALDYTI SUINTERESUOTŲJŲ ŠALIŲ LŪKESČIUS EMOCINIO INTELEKTO RĖMUOSE</b>	<b>PRACTICES OF PROJECT MANAGER TO MANAGE STAKEHOLDERS' EXPECTATIONS USING EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE FRAMEWORK</b>
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# SUMMARY

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*Short description of MA thesis:* Due to the constantly changing project management area it is important to determine influencing factors. Project stakeholders were identified as one of the essential determinants, their performance, and expectations play an important role in the process of the project and its outcome. It was chosen to analyze project managers' practices of managing stakeholder groups – the clients and their respective expectations considering their position in the company. To develop the categorization of the management practices, an emotional intelligence framework providing relevant topics for discussions with research respondents was chosen.

*Aim and Objectives:* the aim of this thesis is to identify the categorization of project managers' practices of dealing with project stakeholders and compare management practices by stakeholders' position in the company. To accomplish that following objectives were determined: 1) To conduct a literature review that will provide a sound basis of emotional intelligence, project managers and project stakeholder management theory thus reveal key concepts for the research background; 2) Using an interview-based method to develop the most dominant patterns of dealing with the project stakeholders'

expectations; 3) To compare the expectations management differences by stakeholder's position in the company; 4) According to the received results by conducting interviews, develop the categorization of practices, recommendations, and conclusions.

*Methodology and Results:* to conduct the study, an inductive qualitative content analysis method was chosen. The empirical data was gathered by semi-structured interviews with 8 project managers, who were selected according to predetermined criteria. The results received from the interview were analyzed and categories of management practices were concluded. Received and analyzed data from the interviews were presented in the matrix table.

*Conclusions.* The research was conducted based on the MSCEIT theory framework and provided topics for project managers' stakeholders' management practices. As the academic literature lacked categorization it was developed from the collected data and 11 practices of managing stakeholders were identified. Moreover, the practices were compared by the stakeholder's position in the company and substantial differences were identified. Furthermore, it was noticed that clients who do not manage their emotions well tend to be treated differently compared to the ones who are pleasant to work with emotionally.

**Keywords:** stakeholder management, expectation management, emotional intelligence, MSCEIT, practices of project managers.

# SANTRAUKA

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*Trumpas darbo apibūdinimas:* Dėl nuolat kintančios projektų valdymo srities svarbu nustatyti ją įtakančius veiksnius. Projekto suinteresuotosios šalys buvo įvardintos kaip vienas iš esminių determinantų, jų veikla ir lūkesčiai vaidina svarbų vaidmenį projekto procese ir jo rezultatuose. Pasirinkta analizuoti projektų vadovų praktiką valdyti suinteresuotųjų šalių grupę – klientą ir atitinkamai kliento lūkesčius, atsižvelgiant į jo poziciją įmonėje. Valdymo praktikų kategorizavimui buvo pasirinkta emocinio intelekto sistema, kuri suteikė aktualias temas diskusijoms su tiriamuoju respondentu.

*Darbo tikslas ir uždaviniai:* Šio baigiamojo darbo tikslas – nustatyti projektų vadovų bendravimo su projekto suinteresuotosiomis šalimis praktikas ir sukurti šių praktikų kategorizaciją bei palyginti valdymo praktikas pagal suinteresuotųjų šalių pozicijas įmonėje. Siekiant įgyvendinti šį tikslą buvo nustatyti tokie uždaviniai: 1) Atlikti literatūros apžvalgą, kuri suteiks tvirtus emocinio intelekto, projektų vadovų ir projekto suinteresuotųjų šalių valdymo teorijų pagrindus ir atskleis svarbiausius konceptus tyrimo prielaidai 2) naudojant interviu pagrįstą metodą, išaiškinti labiausiai dominuojančias projektų vadovų lūkesčių valdymo praktikas; 3) Palyginti lūkesčių valdymo skirtumus pagal

suireresuotosios šalies poziciją įmonėje; 4) Pagal interviu metu gautus rezultatus parengti praktikų skirstymą į kategorijas, rekomendacijas, išvadas.

*Atlikti tyrimai ir rezultatai:* tyrimui atlikti pasirinktas indukcinis kokybinis turinio analizės metodas. Empiriniai duomenys buvo surinkti pusiau struktūruotais interviu, atlikti 8 interviu su projektų vadovais, kurie buvo atrinkti pagal iš anksto nustatytus kriterijus. Buvo išanalizuoti pokalbio rezultatai ir sudarytos išvados apie valdymo praktikų kategorijas. Gauti ir išanalizuoti interviu duomenys pateikti matricinėje lentelėje.

*Pagrindinės išvados:* tyrimas buvo atliktas remiantis MSCEIT teorijos pagrindu, pagal kurį buvo numatytos projektų vadovų suinteresuotųjų šalių valdymo praktikų temos. Kadangi akademinėje literatūroje trūko suskirstymo į kategorijas, ji buvo sudaryta iš surinktų duomenų ir nustatyta 11 suinteresuotųjų šalių valdymo praktikų. Be to, praktika buvo lyginama pagal suinteresuotojo asmens poziciją įmonėje ir nustatyti esminiai skirtumai. Taip pat, pastebėta, kad su klientais, kurie prastai valdo savo emocijas, dažniausiai elgiamasi kitaip nei su tais, su kuriais emociškai malonu dirbti.

***Raktiniai žodžiai:*** suinteresuotųjų šalių valdymas, lūkesčių valdymas, emocinis intelektas, MSCEIT, projektų vadovų praktika.

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## INTRODUCTION

### **The relevance of the topic**

Project management is a continuously changing and growing area. Throughout the years new methodologies were created and as it is steadily developing the new topics are discovered and incorporated into the project management planning. The world faces never imagined realities, people's daily life is adjusting to the hectic rhythm and the business is searching for new opportunities (Radujkovića & Sjekavicab, 2017). Considering this, more and more factors become vital for the project execution and substantial determining risks, solving arising issues, and conducting projects until the successful end. (Heagney, 2016) Surely, one of the most important aspects of project management is its success that could be determined by the quality of the outcome, whether the final result matches with the project stakeholders' expectations, also if the project fits into the defined time and budget frames. Each member of the project – thus stakeholder has their own successful project understanding. Therefore, project success depends on a great number of elements and might be influenced by many constituents. Moreover, project stakeholders are essential in the project implementation, their influence could determine the complexity of the project, yet quite often their significance remains underestimated. Hence, project stakeholders' expectations have been developed, however, their management theory is confined and narrow.

Over the years it has been discussed that the success of the project is highly dependent on the project manager's competencies set and its usage. The study of Alvarenga (2020) shows that out of the listed 28 competencies the following 3 were distinguished as the most relevant and it is: communication, leadership, and commitment (Alvarenga et al., 2020). Ziek and Anderson (2015) identified that communication in project management is not always understood as the exchange of information but rather as sending complete and clear messages. Communication is a complex act and very much depends on the surroundings of the individual, as well as the context of the needed communication, experience. By no doubt it might become ambiguous and be the root cause of the project failure, bearing in mind that a variety of involved persons in the project, require or expect the means of communication they are used to.

Several studies were conducted to investigate the soft skills set of the project manager comparing it to the success rate of his or her projects. In recent years emotional intelligence began to appear as an important aspect not only in people's personal lives but also in work and of course resulting in the project management area. Research by Rezvani et al (2016) shows that there is a clear correlation between job satisfaction, trust, and project success to emotional intelligence. Moreover, there is a direct linkage between the project success and the emotional intelligence of the project manager (Rezvani et al., 2016).

Since the studies show emotional intelligence connection to project management success it is important to analyze how it is practiced in the project management praxis.

### **Problem description**

A great variety of studies review projects and analyze their processes, phases, potential risks, and other important aspects. Consequently, literature provides various analyses on stakeholder communication and management. Turkulainen et al. (2015) discovered that stakeholder management is a complex process, and a dynamic approach is needed to understand it, thus different methods of communication might be applied for the best result. Therefore, communication and stakeholder management involve a variety of dependents that are crucial for the project. It creates additional aspects to manage and plan, thus project managers have to consider this variety and take into account preparing the communication to the involved parties. Also, it is important to pay attention to the expected input made by those involved parties to the project success (Welch & Jackson, 2007). The focus is on external project stakeholders, they mainly have a different perception on the project and its outcome, moreover their expectations are essential for the execution of the project. An external stakeholder group includes a vast number of involved parties, but the most relevant for project results are the stakeholders who receive benefits from the project – the client. Also, this particular group of stakeholders could be analyzed taking into consideration the stakeholder's position in the respective company. It shows how elaborate and deliberate project manager's communication is expected to be and nevertheless often stands to be one of the major factors to the project failure (Abbasi et al, 2014).

Furthermore, project manager's skillset of abilities was scrutinized to find the most efficient approach towards stakeholders' management. Projects are planned in detail and following the plan without any launch of the risks is essential, however, an enormous number of predicaments arise due to the changes and one of the reasons is the stakeholders and the uncertainty that they provoke. (Chapman, 2008) Even though it is a problematic issue, literature and analysis lack extensive understanding about the successful management of the uncertainty elicited by external stakeholders and their expectations.

As the emotional intelligence area of research is opening new bars for discoveries, it is a good opportunity to analyze project management practices within the emotional intelligence framework, which would provide topics to be considered in the research. This study could provide new insights for researchers as well as result in deeper insights for the practitioners about communication with project stakeholders, its dynamics, the relevance of emotional intelligence in the project management and the impact it has.

## **Thesis problem**

The problem to solve in this empirical research is to address the gap in project stakeholder's expectations management.

The thesis analyzes project manager's practices of stakeholder's expectations management according to the emotional intelligence framework and consider management differences by stakeholder's position in the company.

## **The aim of the thesis**

To identify the categorization of project managers' practices of dealing with external project stakeholders and compare those management practices by stakeholder's position in the company.

## **The objectives of the thesis**

Following, *objectives* to implement this research study were set:

1. To conduct a literature review that will provide a sound basis of emotional intelligence, project managers and project stakeholder management theory thus reveal key concepts for background for the research;
2. Using an interview-based method to develop the most dominant practices of dealing with the project stakeholders' expectations;
3. To compare the expectations management differences by stakeholder's position in the company;
4. According to the received results by conducting interviews, develop the categorization of practices, recommendations, and conclusions.

## **The methods of the thesis**

Academic literature review and empirical research were used to answer and implement the objectives of the thesis. The literature review provided the basis for the research and its theory, disclosing the background of the project stakeholder theories, their role in the projects, and management. Moreover, a literature review about emotional intelligence provided insights about the area, recent developments, and implemented research. Information gathered in this topic provided the framework of emotional intelligence to be used further in the research. The following part of empirical research is accomplished using qualitative research method, thus accordingly semi-structured interviews with the selected respondents were conducted to receive information necessary to perform content analysis and review deeper the management practices of project stakeholders, develop the consequent categorization and identify differences according to the stakeholder's position in the company.

## **The structure and the scope of the thesis**

This thesis is constructed of the following parts: introduction, literature review, research methodology, results of the research, conclusions, and recommendations, references, and annex. The introduction presents the relevance of the thesis, informs about the problem of the research, it also includes objectives description, aims, and methods. The following literature review part focuses on providing the formal basis for the research, thus different theories, methods, works of various scholars are presented in order to create a strong background for the study. Further, the research methodology part provides the guidelines of the research and its conduct, also information about the respondents of the research, the instrument of the study, and the process. The next part is dedicated to the results of the study, thus the created categorization of the practices with comparison by the position is provided in detail, alongside the citations from the interviews. Results and conclusions are developed according to the previously mentioned parts.

# 1. THE RELATIONSHIP OF PROJECT MANAGEMENT COMMUNICATION AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

## 1.1 Project stakeholders

The nature of a project is rather complex as it involves many items to take into consideration and become dependents for the success and positive development of the project. Project managers being closest to the work and content of the project mainly put their focus on the project team, yet there are more bodies to be taken care of more seriously and one of such is stakeholders. External stakeholders might create a great deal of stress for project managers (Aaltonen, 2011). Karlson (2002) states that stakeholders take a very important part in the context of the project and in many cases the most important decisions are made by this role. He conducted a survey which indicated that stakeholder management requires more effort and development. Author listed down six steps for the process of managing project stakeholders: initial planning, identification, analysis, communication, action, follow-up. It is pointed out that project stakeholders ought to be paid more attention.

One of the theoretical literature backgrounds for this thesis on stakeholder is based on the theory by Donaldson et al (1995). This theory identifies three aspects important for stakeholder understanding:

- Descriptive/Empirical is used when specific corporate behavior or features are required to be explained;
- Instrumental is used altogether with descriptive if possible when identification of the connection or its absence between the management of the corporate stakeholder and the success towards the goals is bound to be investigated;
- Normative theory is about the interpretation of the entity, its culture, and management in general.

Each theoretical aspect brings its own unique value as the descriptive aspect focuses on the timeline and provides insights for future collaborations and possible expansion, instrumental theory focuses on the financial side of the business, and the normative theory brings perspective and analysis (Donaldson et al, 1995). In Berman et al study (1999) five major stakeholder areas are distinguished; however, focus is mostly on the operations related to the company: employees, the natural environment, diversity (of the workforce), customers and product safety related issues, relations of the community. All these constituents present an impactful relationship with companies' financial and strategic matters.

The more recent literature suggests that stakeholder's participation in the project might be direct or indirect or this body can participate as an observer. It is suggested that the impact to the project by the stakeholder may vary throughout the entire process and in some cases this participation level can be

unpredicted and not planned. Kerzner (2017) states, that the complexity of project managers communication derives from:

- Size of the project;
- Number of the stakeholders;
- Geographical disperse of the stakeholders;
- Stakeholders group consists of different levels executives/managers;
- Cultural and linguistic difference of the stakeholder group.

The problem to the project manager comes from dealing with the above-mentioned factors, as well as when the company's vision or mission is not in line with the project stakeholder value. Stakeholders are interested in the success of the project, yet the bigger the number of involved parties, the greater the number of different values brought by the discontinuous stakeholders (Kerzner, 2017). The project stakeholder view on the project and dedicated value towards it is essential, however this attitude could be altered if the project manager neglects to work and allocate additional time for stakeholder management (Bourne, 2006). Moreover, stakeholders might be favorable to the failure of the project, in such cases the skillset of the manager to control the situation, foresee possible scenarios is very important.

Kerzner (2017) suggests identifying stakeholders after the following criteria:

- Groups, governmental, financial institutions;
- Individuals as executives;
- Contribution provided by resources, finances or technologies;
- Other factors, such as decision making by another body.

To further narrow the research the focus of stakeholder area will be the customer, the direct recipient of the project achievements. Huselid et al. (2005) categorize positions in the companies in the following manner:

- A position – strategic – has a forthright strategical influence in the company, and the performance of such position employees might be very diverse, dependent on a persons' potential, such persons have self-governing managerial rights and belongs to decision making body, the goal of such position is to increase earnings or minimize expenses;
- B position – support – is either a role that supports strategic roles in the company and helps them to reduce risks of negative effect by providing ground for strategic endeavor, or has a possibility of strategic influence but has limited abilities of performance, thus such positions are due to comply to specific procedures and processes of operation;
- C position – surplus – the position on mainly technical content, is necessary for the company, however, make very low influence on the strategic decisions and has little freedom of action at work (Huselid et al., 2005).

Concluding review of stakeholder related literature analysis, we are introduced with various layers and aspects of stakeholder identification, categorization, and management. It is suggested that stakeholder groups could be understood in a theoretical perspective that discloses their patterns and natures as well as in very straightforward categories such as mentioned above in the text. Considering this thesis, the importance and impact made by the stakeholder group is inevitable and thus should be treated accordingly. Having a stakeholder group as a very wide area for following study research it was analyzed and presented in more detail, choosing the focus of this group to be the client. However, the client as an organization is complex itself thus categorization by positions was introduced and will be used further: strategic, support, and surplus (technical) positions.

### **1.1.1 Stakeholder communication**

Kerzner (2017) suggests that the best method to understand project stakeholders is to realize the most important key performance indicators for stakeholders. Once the indicators are set it provides conventional methods to develop the following communication with the group. Furthermore, it is suggested that during the crisis different stakeholders receive not coincidentally different communicational messages (Stephens at al, 2005). To opt for the most suitable type of interaction with the stakeholder it is crucial to evaluate if the stakeholders have an interest in the success of the project and could shift the decision using their influence, also if the stakeholder is from inside the organization or outside, thus internal, or external (Jergeas at al, 2000). Studies show that one of the greatest management challenges is related to communication, resulting from the limited visibility of the activities and lack of a communication system. It is stated that if communication from the start of the project is unclear and fails, specifically related to the appointed results of the project the following attempts to rectify the situation could come as costly and complicated. (Kliem, 2008). Five rules of communication by a manager in the project are distinguished:

- Media is not as important as the people, which indicates that the newest technologies may unburden the process, yet in some cases can take a converse effect. Mainly the people receiving the correct message is vital.
- Communication is an ongoing process throughout the project, frequently project managers take changes, new steps, or certain decisions as common sense and communication becomes contingent, this may occur at the beginning of the project as well as during or the end of it while each phase requires its mode of communication.
- Communication should be determined by the environment of the project as sometimes project managers are reluctant to reconsider the mode of communication, yet due to inevitable changes it is essential to rethink it – not always principles that were effective for previous projects would be sufficient for the following one.

- Communication should be tailored to individual needs as stakeholders come from different managerial cultures and require divergent treatment, however, such behavior for project managers is additional pressure and workload.
- Communication should be focused on the initial message and transmission of the information rather than on data, especially raw. In some cases, managers instead of processed information provide a variety of reports that result in misunderstanding or ignorance from the stakeholder, as the more the data provided the less interest and sense it will bring the stakeholder. (Kliem, 2008).

Fielding (2006) developed a theory that communication should be understood as a transaction that results in the efforts of more than one involved party. He presents two models of communication:

- The linear model is understood as a system composed of seven factors that are related and cooperate to maintain the system. The factors are a sender; a receiver; a message; a channel; feedback; probable barrier expressed as a psychological fuss.
- The convergence model focuses on intercultural communication, how it should be perceived and used, and improved.

It is suggested that most of the issues in the context of communication in the organizations and projects are due to failure to evaluate properly what is required by the party receiving the message, low efforts of listening, and not enough focus on the feedback. Moreover, it is important not to assume that the end party knows more which would conclude in the constricted message. As well such factors as insensitive behavior, cultural differences, amiss planning, focus on wrong aspects, the list is vast and organically volatile (Fielding, 2006). Furthermore, a study by Garvey and Fogel (2008) states that communication processes are highly related to emotions and both operate mainly in sync. Moreover, according to the scholars it is suggested that the emotion and relationship with the person of ongoing communication are closely intertwined and dependent on each other (Garvey & Fogel, 2008). Meaning, that there could be important aspects in the relationship and communication management that could lead to the effectiveness of the conduct of the project.

To conclude, the communication area is widely covered and this sphere of project management during the last decades was particularly developed. In this scientific literature analysis, it is observed that the success of communication is due to many dependents and as well might lead to great failures or the best success. Also, examination of the academic literature shows that the area of project management lacks deeper analysis of relationship, emotion, and communication in project topics, and thus will be further investigated in the empirical research part of the thesis.



## 1.1.2 Stakeholders' expectations management

Some scholars present extensive stakeholders' categorization as well as the approach to managing the stakeholders within the frames of the project (Freeman, 1984; Mitchell et al, 1997). Nowadays, not only members of the company, teams, customers, shareholders play an important stakeholder role for the projects, but as well great importance is brought by the environmental activists, a variety of humanitarian organizations, associations, and alike as they become more impactful (Rowley & Moldoveanu, 2003). According to Mulcahy (2006) stakeholder management process consists of the following procedures:

- Stakeholder identification includes mapping stakeholders not only at the beginning of the project but as well throughout the project which is an often mistake done by the project managers;
- Meeting stakeholder needs, as they need to be satisfied during all the project and alike with new project stakeholders' identification, satisfying their needs are sometimes forgotten in the peak of the project that later on leads to reduced management effectiveness;
- Recognizing and rewarding stakeholders, means that appreciation is a very important managing a project and its stakeholders and thus it should be planned;
- Tracking stakeholders related problems and registering the solutions, as stakeholders often feel like their needs are forgotten in the process of the project it is important to track down their indicated issues and document them so they would feel their contribution is included and important. (Mulcahy, 2006)

The focal point of this research is project stakeholders that receive the service or the product from the project outcome, in other words - the client. Furthermore, from previous literature review, it stands to reason that management of a client as a stakeholder is vital for the project's success. Several practices show that there are different techniques of how to manage your client. Kerzner (2017) claims that for a long time fulfilling clients' expectations was equal to project success and the most important factors were time, cost, and quality. However, there are two types of factors to determine success. Primary are those named previously: time, cost, quality, acceptance by the client and the secondary factors: client's loyalty, good relationship with the client, making the product or service popular, low number of changes throughout the project, minimum amount of the interference to the project, staying true to the company's culture and values, no violations regarding safety requirements, effective processes during the conduct of the project, ethical behavior, strategic consistency, reputation of the company, keeping regulations maintained. Moreover, the client receiving the benefit from the project - a stakeholder could have different expectations according to his or her position in their company, for example, if it is a stockholder, they will be interested in the profit of the project outcome, employees

might be interested in the efficiency and applicability of the service or product of the project, a manager might be thinking about the bonuses that could be applied for him or her. (Kerzner, 2017) Thus, even though in professional life expectations as a determinant of the project are often discussed in advance, in many cases there are hidden triggers that require special treatment. Consequently, to narrow down this broad topic of communication with external stakeholders further for the matter of the research, clients' expectations management will be analyzed.

Baker (2008) identified following important aspects to manage client's expectations: preparing research of the best practice in the area of the service, product or project to be generated; bring the best results including usage of the newest practices, technologies, data; discuss expectations of the one receiving benefit not only before the start of the work but as well before signing the agreement or commencing any other type of relationship; present your ways of working, procedures, policies and other relevant project conduct information, so the client would be informed in advance and could know what to expect; make client feel like he or she belongs, it is important to call client by name and be familiar with his or her position, as well as inform about due changes in the project, project team or other associated matters, thus not only good changes but information about the negative ones should also be communicated; differences of the expectations about the outcome of the project or service should be identified throughout all the time the project is on board. (Baker, 2008) According to Alt-Simmons (2016) customer map is a beneficial tool to understand customers' experience as frequently we fail to see clients' engagement with our company thus missing important aspects to be improved or taken into consideration.

Stakeholder management exists in the literature and is a subject of consideration in project management. A quite broad range of practices could be used. However, it lacks a deeper overview of stakeholders' expectations management as such. It is understood that stakeholders' expectations are a root for many problems that in many cases could not be planned and foreseen, thus this area is considered as a gap in the field and based on the existing studies and examples of practices a categorization for stakeholders' expectations management will be created by conducting empirical research based on the real-life examples from the project management.

## **1.2 Project managers' competencies**

The project manager's importance to the project's success is one of the fundamentals and there is a direct linkage to this phenomenon (Stephenson, 2008). Studies show that a project manager is often responsible for the failures of the project as he or she is responsible for the general management basics such as project planning, budget, schedules, securing the resources, foreseeing the risks, and eliminating them (Zulch, 2014). Also, to manage the project it is vital to maintain communication skills, as well as dealing with stress, problem-solving, leadership, interpersonal skills, to be able to keep up the project

team's spirit (Stevenson et al. 2009). According to Clutterbuck and Hurst (2002) communication is at the center of management competencies, it is essential for managers to develop their communication skills for good team and project results as well as to support organization and its leaders, thus also being able to develop the corresponding relationship with the project team and all involved to achieve the designated goal.

Moreover, projects have very specific criteria of achieving the goal, have deadlines, and are not repetitive, thus project management requires different modes of communication, especially when the project is extensive and enormous amounts of communication are interchanged (Butta et al, 2016). Furthermore, project managers are the core that upholds the considerable flow and variety of communication coming from the team, client, project manager, stakeholders, companies likewise prioritizing the outgoing communication, determines its rules (Kliem, 2008).

Consequently, the patterns of the project manager's communication style and behavior might have a direct linkage to the success of the project. Project team and involved parties rely on project manager's communication and take after the communication style. As the project manager's communication and relationship management is proven to be of great value in the body of project management it will be further focused on in this master thesis.

### **1.3 Emotional intelligence at workplace**

According to the studies where emotional intelligence was measured, persons with the higher score are more agreeable, intelligent in social situations, as well as better relationships in the family surroundings were determined. Moreover, persons with higher emotional intelligence are better at work and possess certain features that empower them for superior results (Mayer et al., 2011).

According to Zeidner, Matthews, and Roberts (2004) Western companies became more aware of emotional intelligence importance choosing a career as well as the idea of emotional intelligence validity in the management of the company. Such abilities as social comprehension, good communication, and understanding of other people are centered on many evaluations and are proved to be vital for successful leading positions in the companies (Zeidner et al, 2004).

Cooper (1997) in his work claims that people would indulge in prosperous careers and superior relationships if more confidence was put on emotional intelligence. He also claims that people with higher emotional intelligence have not only better careers but also more successful personal life, demonstrate leadership, and are even in better health than those with lower emotional intelligence. Moreover, scholars support the idea of competitive advantage attainment relying more on emotional intelligence-related skills that contribute to confidence and assurance as well as higher energy and efficacy in difficult situations where stressful setting requires decisions, thus allowing development.

(Cooper, 1997). Oginska-Bulik (2005) made scientific research and made conclusions that faculty to bear with feelings and emotional information at job helps to deal with stress. (Oginska-Bulik, 2005)

Scholars Bachman et al (2000) found in their study that account officers who perform better results were of higher emotional intelligence than the average of North America and likewise those who performed less significant results were found to be of lower emotional intelligence (Bachman et al, 2000). Hence, the connection between results at work and the level of emotional intelligence of the person are existent (Arora, 2017). In the review work of emotional intelligence at work factors, Zeidner and other scholars (2004) emphasize ideas presented by precedent scholars in the area. One of the key factors is great communication skills (Goleman, 1998) that empower employees to be precise regarding the goals, tasks, status leading to better problem-solving. Moreover, as teamwork is essential in the workplace, efficient social skills are required for a better understanding of the surroundings and can adapt it to the benefit of the product or service provided (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). Furthermore, according to Cherniss (2001) leaders of higher emotional intelligence are better with empathy and are keen to evoke higher commitment from the employees in the company (Cherniss, 2001). George (2000) following his predecessors' works in the field provided insights that emotional intelligence is related to efficacious problem-solving skills. Managers or team leaders being aware and capable of ascertaining the feelings of their teams' members are in a better position to employ their feelings to be in line with the manager's or leader's decisions and aims that follow a general desirable vision. Managers identifying power feelings can draw conclusions regarding certain events or decisions, thus may take it into consideration making priorities. Furthermore, they are in a better position to foresee employees' reactions and feelings to certain changes or developments. George (2000) suggested more empirical research should be performed in order to determine team leaders' influence towards their employees to see a negative or positive impact.

Scholars Zeidner, Matthews, and Roberts argue that the diversity and disaccord regarding emotional intelligence measures and assessment parameters are factors for lack of emotional intelligence application for the wider usage in the professional area (Zeidner et al, 2004). Scholars also suggest that empirical research up until that time is questionable due to contradictions whether the outcomes to the success and behavior at work is related to emotional intelligence or personality matters. It is to say that rigorous selection of emotional intelligence assessment is required in order to perform more valid research.

According to the scholarly literature the relevance of emotional intelligence at work is proven. It revealed the benefits for companies, for employees individually, as well as for the management. Thus, emotional intelligence will be further developed in this thesis.

## 1.4 Emotional intelligence

Emotional intelligence as a concept was broadly developed in the last two decades. Many scholars, as well as non-academics, attempted to depict the essence of emotional intelligence, its components, and cohesion. The notion of emotional intelligence was and still is being developed. One of the important scholars in the field of emotional intelligence is Goleman. He developed the theory of this set of abilities for many years. In his early works, he referred to emotional intelligence as to the personal character and set of personal abilities. (Goleman, 1995). Whereas, Bar-on presented his perception on the topic as a set of noncognitive capabilities with intrapersonal skills (Bar-On, 1997). Bar-On, with other researchers later developing the emotional intelligence topic, created the first test to indicate a person's emotional intelligence (Bar-On and Parker, 2000). In several years scholars Petrides and Furnham (2003) developed their understanding of emotional intelligence, which is a collection of emotions related to self-understanding patterns and how it is expressed.

Emotions are understood as an orderly reply to a human's system and occur due to internal or external events. Whereas intelligence encompasses a great variety of abilities. Researching areas of intelligence many types of intelligence were presented, one of the notes was social intelligence that is related to people management and understanding, however, social intelligence was too broad of a field. Thus, the concept of emotional intelligence was presented. This type of intelligence involves understanding oneself and others, as well as the verbal and non-verbal utterance of emotions (Mayer & Salovey, 1993). Also, this term is described as a subgroup of social intelligence yet upholding the potency to control the feelings and emotions of oneself as well as the others. Moreover, to distinguish between them and use it as knowledge for further directions for actions and cognition. It is emphasized that emotional intelligence specifically focuses on the identification of the emotional condition and how it could be used to tackle an issue or adjust the action (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). The study also focuses on mood as an important aspect since mood lasts more than an emotion. Moreover, emotional intelligence is not only about self-internal processes comprehension but as well as controlling the emotions of other people. Salovey & Mayer (1990) present four principles in the emotional intelligence area:

- Flexible planning, according to the theory, people in a good mood positively conceptualize future development and expect fewer events that would bring negative effects, likewise, people in the state of a bad mood consider future events to be more negative. Such amplitude of considered events could be employed to compose a greater variety of choices as well as to foresee better possible future events.
- Creative thinking studies show that a positive mood is associated with a persons' ability to take smart and unpredicted solutions and discover new methods for problems.

- Mood redirecting attention, this principle states that a person maintaining strong feelings for current problems could easily redirect his/her attention to the most important stimulant in the surrounding setting, thus a person is capable to adapt and allocate attention to it according to the personal priorities.
- The motivating emotions concept focuses on the ability to choose the best technique to motivate oneself or other people (Salovey & Mayer, 1990).

After considerate research of the emotional intelligence area more developments were made and Mayer et al (2011) presented an abstracted set of the ideas in the related field altogether and proposed four branches of skill set of emotional intelligence:

- Cognition of the emotion and its usage, this skill is related to people being able to associate certain feelings with bodily or facial expressions, also recognizing emotions in other people.
- Second skillset is related with the distribution of personal focus according to emotional wellbeing, as well as to prioritize tasks.
- While the third skillset is related to the cognition and usage of emotion, the third skill set is about the cognition and persons usage of language to express the emotion.
- The fourth skill set is related to the ability to control oneself being aware of the experienced emotions.

Moreover, not only this categorization shows the structure of emotional intelligence but as well indicates that emotional intelligence is comparable to the other intelligences as it corresponds to three important empirical criteria:

- Mental issues could be solved and there are correct and incorrect answers for it;
- There is a relationship between skills and mental abilities, as well there is a correlation amongst them;
- The capability to solve issues expands with adulthood (Mayer et al, 2011).

Mayer et al, (2011) admit that their former research led to outcomes such as the understanding that personal characteristics are coherent with emotional intelligence and stating this to be inexpedient thus state that mental abilities are the core of emotional intelligence. Moreover, scholars overlook the field of emotional intelligence and make a comparison of different approaches suggested by such researchers as Goleman (1995), Bar-On (1997) model, and Petrides and Furnham (2003) who devotedly developed emotional intelligence. According to Mayer et al. previously mentioned scholars introduced personality traits into the notion of emotional intelligence unnecessarily thus creating mixed models, such criticism was as well conveyed more widely (Locke, 2005; Mayer, Roberts & Barsade, 2008).

More about foundational logic that emotional intelligence is divided into is published in a paper by J. Mayer (2002). According to Mayer et al. theory (1997, 2008, 2011) emotional intelligence is divided into four branches:

- Perceiving emotions - this category is related to the cognition of the feelings of oneself as well as of those surrounding. Abilities that are assigned to the category are related with recognition of the person's feelings according to his or her emotions expressed by face. Persons that have high levels of emotional intelligence in this category are considered to be good at reading people. Authors even determine such spheres as marketing, coaching, communication as perspective for those who have great abilities of perceiving emotions.
- Facilitating thought - is a capability to achieve emotion and then perform intellectually with it. Taking in the main emotional sense into cognition, including comparing emotions with each other and additional senses while this leads to diversion of the thought. Basically, this ability is related to the person's capacity to create a correct mood in order to create a foundation for reasoning and logic. Moreover, it is claimed that performing high in this category shows one's ease in understanding the bonds of emotion towards conduct and motivation. Typical features of such persons are openness, emotional availability, and creativity.
- Understanding emotions – concentrates on accepting and being able to explain complicated feelings, from where it originates, how it relates to the other emotions and thus develops. This category focuses on the questions that investigate mixing of the feelings that create a new one, as well as how a certain feeling could change into a different one. Furthermore, knowing how to deal with it. Emotional combinations, its components and the shifts are in the middle of this category and helps people better understand others, read their emotions and understand their needs due to the emotional chains' perception.
- Managing emotions – a category that is responsible for handling and conducting appropriately one's and as well other's emotions. Abilities assigned to this category allows one to control oneself after being angry or being able to be empathetic with a stressful person. Furthermore, it is divided into two sub-groups: self-management and social management. High level of intelligence in this category leads to the conclusion that a person is accountable for one's feelings and knows that there are courses of actions to be taken in order to eliminate emotional pain and feel better, as well as to evaluate situations from different angles. People with such abilities are prone to make reasonable well weighed decisions. Whereas social management is more about understanding other persons feelings and can express it. Such people have great social skills and do not make people feel uncomfortable if they have negative feelings, thus do not take it personally. Person who is good at managing emotions is able to make decisions that encompass recognition of other people's emotions. (Mayer, 2002)

Emotional intelligence as a field of research in the last two decades was very popular and different theories of it were created. However, based on the literature and critiques presented previously this master thesis will be based on the Mayer et al (2011) theory and its categorization. Not only the theory was adapted and developed throughout the years, but it also omits personality traits from the concept of emotional intelligence thus providing stronger ground for further research. This theory is considered as one of the fundamental ones and several researches in the field are performed and developed based on it.

## **1.5 Measurement of emotional intelligence**

Alongside the theory and models of emotional intelligence concepts of emotional intelligence, measurement was developed. To better understand this type of intelligence and thesis focus the following literature analysis will be covering mentioned topics.

Scholars Mayer et al (2011) generalized previous ideas in this area and provided principles that were set out. First, emotional intelligence could be categorized into “specific-ability” - tests that develop a particular range of emotional intelligence and “integrative-model” method that considers more than one emotional intelligence ability range. Below are presented some examples of emotional intelligence measurement methods:

- “Diagnostic Analysis of Nonverbal Accuracy” (DANVA), a method that focuses on a person’s ability to determine emotions in behavior, face, reception of the surroundings (Nowicki & Carton, 1993; Pitterman & Nowicki, 2004);
- “Japanese and Caucasian Brief Affect Recognition Test” (JACBART) is based on the recognition of facial expressions linked to emotions (Matsumoto et al., 2000);
- “Situational Test of Emotional Understanding” (STEU) and “Situational Test of Emotion Management” (STEM), STEU focuses on the ability to ascertain and react accordingly in the more complex emotional context, whereas STEM methodology develops management of the emotions (MacCann & Roberts, 2008);
- “Schultz and Izard’s Assessment of Children’s Emotion Skills” (ACES), this method is dedicated to children cognition and measurement of their understanding of emotions that arise from certain social settings and how that affects behavior (Schultz et al., 2001);
- “Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test” (MSCEIT) is a test based on the four areas of the scholars’ model and it takes the sensation of the emotions, applying the sense to appease the thought, conception of the emotions, and ability to manage them (Mayer et al., 2011).



Above mentioned tests are based on the notion of emotional intelligence thus mixed models including personality traits into the testing are not mentioned in this review.

MSCEIT emotional intelligence is still quite controversial and there are some areas to be more examined and research could be done, however, this test was one of the front-runners in a list of emotional intelligence tests. (Maul, 2012).

A great variety of different emotional intelligence tests are developed based on different theories. However, having developed literature analysis in the measurement and scaling of emotional intelligence further conclusions were made. Emotional intelligence tests are focusing on personal abilities and only provide evaluations by categories showing results of person’s scores, whether person has a high level of emotional intelligence and what could be improved.

To conclude, extensive research shows that emotional intelligence is very important for project managers as their results and performance is linked to their emotional abilities. Consequently, it is essential to recognize it and how it impacts one’s daily life and work area. It is suggested that based on emotional intelligence patterns different behavioral solutions could be introduced in communication, relationship management. Furthermore, this master thesis will be developing project managers' practices of managing expectations as a part of communication management. It will be based on the emotional intelligence categories introduced by Mayers et al (2011) as they provide interesting and relevant areas for research of practices rather than focusing on personal abilities. To implement the objective of the study for the matters of the empirical research the following matrix table was composed in order to appropriately systemize received data from intended interviews. This table will be used to present research results.

Table 1 *Instrument for research data analysis*

	<b>Perceiving emotions</b>	<b>Facilitating though</b>	<b>Understanding emotions</b>	<b>Managing emotions</b>
<b>Strategic</b>				
<b>Support</b>				
<b>Technical</b>				

*Source:* Composed by the author.

## 2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The following part is dedicated to research methodology and its description. It focuses on the aim and objectives, as well as research design and process presentation. This part also explains the development of research instrument and provides reasoning of the empirical research methods chosen altogether with the acumen of choosing the sample for research study and research instrument.

### 2.1 Research process and design

Research design is the strategy of data collection and analysis that is required to answer research questions. The research is constructed of three parts that are a collection of the data, data analysis, and preparation of the respective report (Creswell, 2017; Kumar, 2018).

*Qualitative research* was chosen as it is used in cases where analysis by digging deeper is in need. Moreover, qualitative research helps to navigate through personal respondents' experiences and provide insights into why and how some phenomena occur. Interview as a method of perceiving information allows researchers to approach persons' minds and thoughts directly, grasp the first thoughts without delays and rethink the "correct" answer. Furthermore, by conducting interviews researchers have a chance to come empathetically closer to an interviewee which would allow more honest answers. (Silverman, 2020; Yin, 2015)

According to N. King et al (2018) there are no rules that would be applicable for all qualitative research as it attempts to explore ideas and thoughts rather than making research a generalized theory of a phenomenon. (King N. et al, 2018). As there are different methodologies of qualitative research:

- Narrative – a method focusing on the analysis of narrative text features;
- Phenomenology – is a rather subjective methodology that analyses individual phenomena and its approach ;
- Grounded theory – is a complex method when the data is collected and only then is a theory developed according to the collected information;
- Action research – is a methodology that focuses on the solutions and actualization of the issue in the organizational context;
- Case study – is the analysis of a single event or several less significant events that are interpreted in a scholarly manner;
- Ethnography – is one of the deepest methods where long term observation of different age groups, behaviors is needed and is very much of anthropological context;

- Historical research focuses on the time and place of the center of the study as well as its advancement;
- The content analysis focuses on the recorded, written, imageable, spoken information that is usually perceived by open-ended questions. (Creswell, 2017; Mohajan, 2018)

The ***approach of the research is inductive*** when referencing a limited number of samples to make generalizations about subjects, cases, situations and formulate fundamental or universal propositions about all general congeries (Rupšienė, 2007).

To analyze the collected data a ***content analysis*** was chosen, and the focus of this strategy is counting off the recurring models of words, expressions thus developing the messages and linkages of these patterns, moreover, the core of this strategy is answers to the open-ended questions (Hancock et al., 2009) and as it was mentioned previously open-ended questions allow to get a more honest and informative answer. Chosen method to collect needed data for the research was ***semi-structured interviews***. Interviews allow to get deeper into the experiences and thoughts of the interviewed person, thus further method is presented. Rupšienė (2007) claims that semi-structured interviews are the most considerate for qualitative research. In such a scenario the researcher can prepare topics and problems that will be discussed during the interview in advance, however, is not bound to the order of the priority or the exact wording. The advantage of such interviews is that received information is more precise and systematic compared to the unstructured interviews, however, it still keeps the informality of the conversation which allows the natural flow of the interviewed person's expressions. (Rupšienė, 2007)

***The aim of this research study*** is to develop a categorization of practices employed by project managers to manage stakeholders' expectations and analyze whether and, if yes, how the practices differ in the context of stakeholders' position in the company. To perform the empirical research a dedicated process was identified and created. The focus is a project manager's practices influencing the behavior, perception of expectations of external stakeholders and their management, choice of communication, decision-making, identifying stakeholder's needs, and respective course of action. The framework of Mayer, Salovey, Caruso Emotional Intelligence theory was chosen (Mayer et al, 2011). The categorization of emotional intelligence abilities developed by the researchers revealed topics that were further discussed during the interviews. The received information accordingly could be mapped with the theory and most dominant, repetitive patterns of data could be suggested for research conclusions.

***The process of the research*** is divided into 5 stages. The first stage is dedicated to the scholarly literature analysis, formulation of the topic, analysis of its relevance, established research problematic, aim and objectives. The second stage includes the composition of the research instrument and the methodology for the empirical research is determined: qualitative content analysis using semi-structured

interviews. The third stage focuses on the research implementation, intended data is collected. Therefore, 8 interviews with project managers were conducted. During the fourth stage information received during the interviews was transcribed, analyzed, and coded for methodological purposes, necessary information was translated into English as the interviews were conducted in Lithuanian language. The final fifth stage is dedicated to the conclusions and recommendations preparation.

*The process of semi-structured interviews* was implemented from November – December of 2021. Based on the criterion sampling method project managers were invited to the interviews either by email or verbally. Interviewed persons choose the time and place suitable for them. 4 interviews were held physically in the chosen surrounding of the respondent and 4 interviews were held by online *MS Teams* platform calls. Interviews were conducted based on the in advance prepared semi-structured interview questionnaire, before the start of the interview all respondents were introduced with the scope and topic of the research, principles of ethics, and representation mean of the prospective results were reported. The length of the interviews lasted from 32 to 64 minutes. Each interview was appropriately recorded with the permission of the interviewed person. To conduct the interviews properly an interview protocol (Annex 1) was structured. It included the basic information about the interviewer, introduction of the research, instructions regarding the usage of the interview's content, and matters of confidentiality. At the end of each interview, respondents were able to complement their narration with additional information that could be useful but were not asked about during the conversation. After the interview, all respondents' input was appreciated and thanked appropriately. The records afterward were transcribed to *Microsoft Word* format files. Each respondent was encoded by the letter “R” and number.

## **2.2 Research sample**

It is fundamental to correctly determine sample size and its purpose as even though most of the qualitative studies rely on the small number of sampling it remains as a crucial factor to receive appropriate data (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005), however, there are no rules for clear sample size (Rupšienė, 2007). M. Patton (1990) listed the following types of sampling:

- Typical cases sampling;
- Intensity sampling;
- Extreme or deviant-case sampling;
- Maximum-variation sampling;
- Homogeneous sampling;
- Critical case sampling;
- Confirmatory and disconfirmatory cases;

- Convenience sampling;
- Snowball sampling;
- Criterion sampling;
- Theory-based or operational construct;
- Opportunistic sampling;
- Stratified purposeful sampling;
- Random purposeful;
- Politically important cases;
- Combination or mixed purposeful (Patton, M., 1990).

After careful consideration of the different types of the samples, the most applicable type was chosen – criterion sampling. This sampling is aimed when persons to be interviewed are selected according to certain features decided by the research (Patton, 1990). Considering the research objectives following criteria for persons to be interviewed were drawn:

- 3 or more years of experience as project manager;
- Responsibility of communicating and managing projects' stakeholders;
- To have experience with projects when from the client's side more than one person was involved.

The above criteria for respondents are chosen due to the intended complexity of the research. As the qualitative research study's aim is to dig deeper, seek the origin of certain behavior or decisions, the experience in the field is necessary to grasp the practices that were proven by project managers to work or vice versa be an example of inappropriate management. The following criterion is related to stakeholder management, which is a part of the study focus. Consequently, it is particularly important to interview project managers who directly deal and communicate with the project client, the direct receiver of the project benefits, so that the respondents could share correlative experiences from their performance. The last criterion set for the designated respondent provides a basis to analyze the differences and similarities of management if such is the case in regard to the stakeholder's position in the respective company.

Such type of sampling is highly effective as it allows collection of expedient data, yet a recommended number of individual interviews to be performed differs from 5 to 30. It is suggested that interviews should be conducted until the perceived information is new, meaning that once the answers become repetitive the sample size is enough to develop the empirical research analysis. (Rupšienė, 2007).

The size of the sample was not determined in advance, the interviews were processed until the received information started to be repeated, the content became less informative and main aspects necessary for the study started to emerge. The goal of the interviews was not the quantity of the respondents but rather the quality and comprehensiveness of received data determining the ability for deeper insights. Due to confidentiality and privacy requirements, the names of the interviewed persons will not be disclosed in this study thus coding of the interviewees will be provided. In total 8 project managers were interviewed; all the respondents work in the field for three or more years. The respondents are encoded with the letter “R” and numbers.

### **Information about the respondents**

**R1:** Works as the project manager for 10 years, the area of the projects – IT related. R1 works in an international company which is based in more than 15 countries including Lithuania, the company operates in telecommunications, TV services, and IT. The company in Lithuania has over 2000 employees.

**R2:** 3 years of experience in project management, the position in the company – IT project manager. Company of R2 is based in Lithuania and has over 3800 employees, the services provided include financial services in Lithuania, courier services, postal services.

**R3:** Respondent has 3 years experience in the area, in the company is responsible for learning and development projects. Respondent works in a global professional services company that provides tax, auditing, accounting, business consultancy services and operates in more than 150 countries in the world. The company has over 300 employees in Lithuania.

**R4:** Respondent works as project manager for 10 years, position in the company – business process improvement project manager. The company of the respondent is based in Lithuania and has over 10 employees. It is a consulting company providing complex services according to the Theory of Constraints and LEAN methodologies.

**R5** The person works in the field for 5 years and is a project manager in an audit professional services company. Respondent works in a global professional services company that provides tax, auditing, accounting, business consultancy services and operates in more than 150 countries in the world. The company has over 300 employees in Lithuania.

**R6** Works in the company as project manager for 3 years and is responsible for audit projects. Respondent works in a global professional services company that provides tax, auditing, accounting,

business consultancy services and operates in more than 150 countries in the world. The company has over 300 employees in Lithuania.

**R7** Respondent has 3 years' experience in project management; the field of the projects is IT-related. R.7. works in a rail transport and transportation company that has over 1100 employees and mainly operates in Lithuania and cooperates with the neighboring countries.

**R8** 3 years of experience in project management, respondent manages financial crime investigation related projects. Respondent works in a global professional services company that provides tax, auditing, accounting, business consultancy services and operates in more than 150 countries in the world. The company has over 300 employees in Lithuania.

### **2.3 Instrument of the research**

Based on the literature analysis, research aim, and objectives to make the research more systematic, a matrix table has been compiled, which reflects the conclusions of the scholarly literature analyzed previously, chosen theories, and methods. The table is constructed for data and results representation. The table is divided into four columns that represent MSCEIT theory categories: perceiving emotions, facilitating thought, understanding emotions, managing emotions. While *y-axis* is situated by the categories of personnel positions in the companies as suggested by Huselid et al. (2005): strategic, support, technical (surplus). This table intends to assist in developing categorization of stakeholder's expectations management and allow easier examination of the distinctions among the positions. This instrument was a visual material shown for respondents before the interview, consequently, more awareness about the topic and its focus would be created. Thereafter, when data received from respondents is analyzed the table will be mapped and developed categories allocated to the respective space in the table.

For research purposes, methods of semi-structured interviews were chosen. To implement the research a questionnaire of 10 main questions was constituted. Questions are based on the MSCEIT categories as they revealed essential and revealing topics to be considered for the research analysis, moreover, the aim was to map received information thereafter within the matrix table. In order to broaden some topics or situations that emerged during the conversation, additional questions were asked. During the conversation, respondents were able to initiate topics or develop those that seemed to be important for the research. Not all questions were asked in the precise order as the questionnaire was constituted, according to the course of the conversation following questions were asked as they seemed appropriate and relevant. In some cases, questions had to be rephrased or explained. Respondents

focused on different questions thus on the length of the answers. Also, some questions were not needed to be asked as the respondent would unintentionally talk about the following question matters.

The interviews were conducted in Lithuanian language in order for the respondents to feel more comfortable during the interviews and be able to talk in native language, as well as it allowed respondents to express themselves better.

Following is a questionnaire of the research.

Table 2 *The semi-structured interview questions*

<b>Interview questions</b>
<b>Perceiving emotions</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How do you determine if the client is satisfied or not with the project other than written communication? Do you take special actions to determine it?</li> <li>2. How do you identify if the stakeholder feels comfortable with the project team and ongoing situation? Do you treat stakeholders differently if their position differ, you communicate with them not at the same time?</li> <li>3. How do you notice stakeholders' feelings that might affect your project? What actions do you take if the stakeholder is from a decision-making body or technical position?</li> </ol>
<b>Facilitating thought</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What are the techniques to create a sense of belonging and trust for project stakeholders - clients? Does it differ by the position of stakeholder?</li> <li>2. Do you track how performing according to your company's values affects the client? If yes, how? If not, then what values do you base your performance on?</li> </ol>
<b>Understanding emotions</b>



1. Did you ever have to pause or change the plan of action, communication with the project stakeholder due to his or her emotions? In such case is the position of the stakeholder important? If not, then how do you behave if the client is dissatisfied?
2. What helps you to manage project stakeholder's emotions, how does it differ by the position?

### **Managing emotions**

1. How do you manage incompatible expectations of those involved in the project? Have you ever noticed different executives' and technical employees' expectations? How do you behave in such case?
2. Have your personal emotions ever affected the conduct of the project due to different your and client's cultural values? How do you behave if there are cultural differences? Has the project ever been affected by the client's emotions regarding the project?
3. What emotions do you try to create for project stakeholders? How do they differ by position?

*Source:* Composed by the author.

## **2.4 Research ethics**

It is important to follow the principles of ethics during the research as otherwise, it could have a negative impact on the research validity (Žydžiūnaitė & Sabaliauskas, 2017). First of all, during the research, it was important to take care of the respondent's wellbeing related to participation in the research. The researcher received confirmations of willingness to participate in the interview. Further research was conducted based on these ethical principles:

- Respect to the privacy of the respondent, during the interviews there was no pressure to answer questions if they seemed to be uncomfortable, discrimination or implications of answers' evaluation were avoided.
- The principle of benevolence is based on respect for the person's privacy. To conduct the research with mutual researchers and participants' will, a positive research atmosphere was

invoked. Research participants had free will to make decisions to answer or not particular questions.

- Confidentiality and anonymity are extremely important in qualitative research, as the aim is to get deeper into the problems, practices, or other relevant information thus disclosure of respondent's identity could be crucial. Accordingly, it is appointed that the data received during the research would be available only to the researcher. The identities of participants were coded, and information provided in the research on the participants is only essential to the research and the identities could not be revealed.

### 3. RESEARCH RESULTS

The following chapter is dedicated to the findings of the empirical research data. After conducting interviews with chosen respondents, the information received was transcribed, presented for the interviewees for data validation, and further was carefully analyzed based on the previously presented literature analysis, and necessary information translated. Once the information was processed the practices by project managers dealing with project clients' expectations were identified and subsumed into the subcategories and categories. Thus, the empirical research resulted in the classification of practices for project stakeholders' (client) expectations management. The further chapter focuses on the explanation and deeper reasons for the presented practices.

The questionnaire was created based on the emotional intelligence categorization by Mayers et al. (2011) theory, it provided the topics that could be important to be developed in the project management sphere. As well as, to narrow the stakeholder management area, a client as one of the stakeholder group members was chosen and for the matter of analysis, three levels of employees were determined. Moreover, the classification is created analyzing the key factors of the mentioned determinants and will be explained in detailed reasoning.

Analysis of the study results was accomplished based on the latest research data analysis. This means that performing latent content analysis the content of the text is focused on the meanings which in different situations could become main concepts (Žydzīūnaitė & Sabaliauskas, 2017). The research was performed according to the inductive method therefore following steps conducting the analysis of received data were completed.

Researcher reading transcriptions of the interviews and analyzing the data should make oneself distant from the existing theories (Žydzīūnaitė & Sabaliauskas, 2017). Thus, after carefully reading study material and having thoroughly examined the study problem from the data material research problem-related aspects were distinguished. Such aspects appeared in text extracts, sentences, or parts of the sentences. These units were transferred into a separate table and each unit was given a short description focusing on the main idea and sub-category. Following, categories were created forming propositions that encompass sub-categories that are alike content-wise, and they were connected according to their meaning. Conducting analysis and interpreting data the research problem constituents were taken into consideration, hence sub-categories and categories would be related to the project managers' practices managing project's clients who hold different positions in their company.

After careful analysis categorization of practices was created. Each practice was attributed to the respective emotional intelligence category according to its prevailing features, analyzing and comparing them to the theory. Further, each practice explanation and description are provided using the information received during the interviews, as well as the list of sub-categories are provided to present deeper

insights on the matter. Also, each practice section includes the comparison of the stakeholder expectations management differences by the employees' position in their companies or the most distinguishing features. Each section includes a short overview of project managers differing by position.

**Perceiving emotions:** the category represents abilities related to the recognition of the emotions (Mayer, 2002). This ability is highly beneficial and should be exploited while *coordinating the expectations* of the stakeholders. According to the received data in many cases determining feelings in advance prevent growing tension and/or accumulating problems in the project environment.

**Facilitating thought:** persons with great faculty in this category could awaken the emotion and use it to compare with other emotions, make conclusions regarding the emotion in personal or professional life Mayer, J. D. (2002). This is the reason why the following practices are included in this category – *acknowledging efforts* as for noticing and treating the involved stakeholders with empathy, perhaps creating the emotion for oneself or the other party, and *building confidence*, where deeper thoughts and decision-taking to create particular emotions is needed.

**Understanding emotions:** according to the theory this part is related to being able to understand how some emotions are interrelated and their transformations Mayer, J. D. (2002), thus persons with this ability are capable to construct certain emotions for desirable effect, consequently, practices of *behaving empathically, compromising, focusing on project benefits*, and *adhering with company's values* fall unto this category.

**Managing emotions:** abilities attributed to this category allow the person to navigate through their own emotions and operate as disposed and equally operate with the emotions of the others (Mayer, 2002). All of the further practices require proficient emotional management – *communicating professionally, differentiating communication, managing emotions* (as a practice), *showing attention to clients*. These examples require managers to be well-behaved and strong emotionally to overcome personal emotions and face the pressure and influence of external emotions.

### 3.1 Acknowledging efforts

Throughout the project realization, demanding and stressful situations occur more often than could be predicted. While the result is due to be on time and within the framework of the allocated budget the efforts by the team members are quite often not appreciated enough which leads to tension in the team, consequently low motivation builds more problems. This is one of the reasons why the project managers focus on praising the team. Moreover, it was claimed that it is important to

communicate your appreciation of the project team to the client as the client's satisfaction is influenced by being aware of the project process and thus grows the respect for the project team.

As much as the project team requires an appreciation for the qualitative results, the client efforts are also tended to be not forgotten by project managers and they focus on thanking them for the results, cooperation, and other important aspects. Such behavior adds to building a better relationship with the client.

D1: *"I always want for clients to feel comfortable, without stress, always sincerely find out what is what and I encourage them to tell what is bothering them to avoid problems later. At the end of the project, I always thank those involved in the project. Sometimes it is even more important to thank technical employees, even after the meeting."*

This category was constituted by the further information systemized according to the information received during the interviews:

- Expressing gratitude for the client

D1: *"It is sometimes more important to be thankful for middle-level employees for their work and cooperation as for the leaders the most important thing is the result and that's it, while employees are more involved, have more work to do and get to cooperate more."*

- Commending you team

D8: *"You always write with the concern, saying that we are trying, doing our bests, maybe you involve some emotions, show that we want the best result, praise your team. Sometimes you write and say that the team is really trying, and we wish for cooperation, and expect the same from them."*

**Strategic:** project managers are not focusing on thanking strategic level employees, due to their lower involvement in the process of the project, personal relationship is not built.

**Support:** project managers focus on support level employees in regards to showing appreciation. As support personnel is often key persons for contact, information receipt, coordination of the project process and results with project manager, consequently stronger bond is created. Also, this category has a higher impact providing feedback, moreover, their opinion is important choosing vendors of the services.

**Technical:** project managers pay attention to expressing their appreciation for clients' technical employees with whom they communicated as these people usually do the real visible assignments and also their input often is vital for qualitative project implementation.

### 3.2 Behaving empathically

According to the project managers, empathy managing the project and the team helps to achieve better results, maintain healthy relationships, and be more efficient. It was mentioned that communicating on a human level with the client in stressful situations, being as friendly as possible, and trying to explain difficult problems in an easy manner helps to prevent conflicting situations. As well as the correct informal communication helps lower clients' stress levels.

During several conversations, it was confirmed that showing interest in the client and their wellbeing promotes alliance, creates a friendly atmosphere in which communication, consultations, and tasks are executed in a more efficient manner. It is also noted that informal communication is self-allowed by project managers only with the support and technical level of the client's employees. One of the reasons is the limited time with the strategic level personnel and the extent and content of the interaction among the mentioned level employees

D3: *“With the highest client’s leaders you always feel more responsibility, wish to show that you control everything, with the lower ranks there is more familiar communication when maybe you know that you are not that much judged.”*

This category was determined by combining several following topics:

- Communicating informally

D5: *“You always send communication, and so casually ask unofficially how the team is, how is the client, how they are managing their work, how they plan their responsibilities, their activities...”*

- Creating friendly atmosphere

D1: *“<...> sometimes we bring and coffee, and sweets just to make more pleasant surroundings.”*

- Helping the client

D2: *“We try to help the client, so yes, calm conversations, realizing that it is a conversation among people despite differences in the companies.”*

**Strategic:** Communication with strategic level stakeholders is generally formal, professional, and is kept short and clear.

D3: *“With the highest level of leaders there is always more responsibility, wish to show yourself, that you control everything, in a lower level the communication is more familiar.”*

**Support:** Employees of this level receive more empathetic communication.

D4: “<...> so of course you differentiate, even in the sent communication you can let yourself a little send with a joke and in a freer style send the message, express your emotions. So very calmly, not too much.”

**Technical:** Employees of this level receive more empathetic communication, also for technical personnel project managers often provide information and are not the point of contact for coordination of matters.

D3: “<...> maybe you know that you are not so much assessed and that has less influence to your work and considering technical people, they are more informed and do not negotiate, we ask for their help, and with them, the communication is led formal, lower level of stress is felt.”

### **3.3 Building confidence**

Clients confidently rely on the project team, company. The outcome is the goal for many businesses resulting in profitable and loyal cooperation and a pleasant working atmosphere. Thus, creating a sense of confidence is on the project managers' agenda. The experience of interviewed project managers revealed that to create confidence it is important to communicate frankly without disguising problems or certain situations, being available for calls, meetings, and other requests that the client expects. Moreover, confidence is highly appreciated in the project team and is built on the open atmosphere, colleagues solving the problems, not looking for who was responsible for the mistake.

D7: “Well you see, when I am in the project, I always try to create such an atmosphere where cards are on the table and if there is something wrong you can bravely ask questions and like in a normal family, where some issues appear you talk, discuss and solve.”

To build confidence project managers practices were grouped into the following topics:

- Building connection with the client

D8: “Personally for me it is important to have good relationship with the team of the client, understanding each other and being useful.”

- Creating an open and comfortable atmosphere

D7: *“It is also with the clients that we go through being open if there is something, there are questions, satisfaction, dissatisfaction, then we encourage them to raise those questions. But there is no such methodical solution, we just go through that healthy relationship and talk openly.”*

- Taking responsibility

D5: *“<...> I carry the responsibility for how the team is formed. Maybe that also adds to building the confidence, that I am in control of what my team is doing, I know everything what is done and what is not, so I can bring it summed up to the client and report.”*

- Creating a sense of confidence

D6: *“I ask the client directly what he expects from the team, from the audit. I try to create this emotion, that well if there are problems, then let me know and I will deal with it, there will be solutions and so on.”*

**Strategic:** The higher the rank in the company, the more confidence is essential.

D4: *“Difference by positions is that the higher the position the more important is the confidence for the final project outcome and project reliability <...>”*

**Support:** Confidence is important as well as open communication, but the focus is lower than for strategic level stakeholders.

D5: *“First of all I try to create a sense of confidence for the client, calmness, realization that there is no need to panic. It is pleasant when there is the emotion of friendly cooperation.”*

**Technical:** Technical employees are fundamentally concerned about their own processes and their evaluation.

D4 *“<...> while technical employees are more concerned about their daily processes, how they are assessed and evaluated.”*

### **3.4 Communicating professionally**

The practice of communicating professionally was proven to be the essential one. Each interviewed project manager admitted that everything starts and finishes with good communication, thus without communication of the highest standards the project is prone to face more risks. In some cases clients are not as much aware of technical details and processes as the project team, thus it might create misunderstandings. To prevent mentioned situations visual means, process mappings, and alike could



help for smoother project communication. Also, it is natural that a project manager might not be aware of the smallest details about IT-related matters, product specifications, or other circumstantial business. When it comes to explaining the client, it is better to ask technical personnel to present it, provide additional analysis or invite the more qualified person to explain. Project managers shared that noting down every meeting with the client and decision taking into the protocol, preparing relevant communication means, and distributing to those who were involved in the meeting help to clarify matters and lower the risk of misinterpretation. Furthermore, changes of the project, continuous update on the process, status reports, changes in the frequency of communication in case of issues, asking for feedback/answer/confirmation after each means of communication, all of this contributes to professional communication.

D1: *“Always sending a communication to the client, I think he needs to feel that it is his project, he is a part of the project and I always wait for communication from the client, if everything is okay, I always ask for confirmation, communication is in the first place.”*

Professional communication excels in many features, further the practices of addressing project stakeholders is provided in a list as described by the interviewees:

- Communicating forward

D3: *“I like to inform in advance before I am asked. Then somehow you get there before things happen and you create an emotion that situation is under control <...>”*

- Communicating visually

D1: *“We show the changes, required integrity, all the links, the actions, and processes practically, visually, so that they would understand it better.”*

- Providing additional information

D8: *“<...> so, they agree right away, if not we provide additional information, additional analysis, or evaluation <...>”*

- Protocolling meetings

D7: *“But the meetings are protocoled, meetings are communicated, and information is sent to all the leaders and teams who personally attended the meeting. We send all the required attachments <...>”*

- Communicating consistently

D2: *“So according to my practice the most important is to communicate constantly. Do not leave space for interpretation.”*

**Strategic:** Strategic level clients’ employees receive concise, clear information. If the communication to strategic level leaders from the client company receives information, accordingly the same level of leaders in the project manager’s company should be informed accordingly.

D1: *“But for leaders, it is more specific, shorter, not expanding too much. Regarding bosses, it is relevant not to overburden them, so there would not be additional questions, and all the topics we present in a clear and short manner.”*

**Support:** Professional, more empathetic, and down-to-earth communication.

D5: *“Always professionally, messages for the client as well, unless you are closer with the person or the person is in a lower-level position, sometimes if there is a possibility you communicate more freely with some of them.”*

**Technical:** Professional, more empathetic, and down-to-earth communication. Also, differs in frequency and detail.

D1: *“<...> communicating with some technical employees or testers you let yourself to make jokes and the messages are not so formal <...>”*

### 3.5 Compromising

Compromising is a complex task that project managers face frequently in projects. Not only dealing with the company and the project team, but as well managing different interests in the project, and as well expectations. However, even though it is not easy, it is an inevitable responsibility. Project managers shared the best experience is to attentively listen to all involved parties and only then resume for solutions. Neither client nor the project team should start feeling unheard and not important. The mere act of listening is helpful, yet it is also important to show that accordingly actions were taken to resolve the issue and none of the involved sides “won” the problem, but the best possible solution was found.

D5: *“Firstly, we look for the cause. I listen for both sides and then I decide what decision to take, how to resolve the issue. So, we deal through calming down people, we show them that indeed we care about them, I spent time acting on the problem and the solution was found.”*

According to the interview material compromising covers the following groups of activities:

- Understanding

D2: *“So, first of all, we try to understand if the client is satisfied with the process and if not, then we try to find a common decision and to grasp critical point in the client’s processes, so that these processes would be effective for them and as well so that we as a company producing the product would not have to change all the system.”*

- Listening

D5: *“Firstly I try to listen for what is really happening, so that such emotion is rising, what is not working in that project if the work is done not under the quality standards or is it impossible to contact.”*

- Cooperating

D7: *“It is important to cooperate and not to throw the responsibility on someone else saying that they have to take the decision.”*

**Strategic & support:** In some cases, strategic and support level interests are taken more important than the other ranks.

D3: *“There is a tendency to listen more of executives and middle-level employees. It is important to hear all opinions so that they would feel important <...>”*

**Technical:** No essential differences were noticed.

### 3.6 Coordinating expectations

Expectations management consists of many constituents yet coordinating expectations and directly taking care of them seems to be unquestionable. However, in some cases planning the project expectations of the client are not the key focus in the project manager’s agenda. This topic is about the conditions of working together, setting rules for efficient work.

Project managers shared that an important condition is to be in the conformity of authority involved in the project from the company’s and client’s side as the difficult situations could be solved at an appropriate level. Furthermore, it is stressed that the ways of working should be discussed and decided during the first meeting with the client. It includes such things as the frequency of communication, means of communication, the contact person, and other important questions. Moreover,

in some cases, the projects are arranged according to the Agile methodology and some matters mentioned previously are not valid, however, in such project's success factors should be determined in order to move efficiently throughout the project.

D8: *“During the kick-off meeting we get to know each other, ask about the expectations, how frequently they want follow-up, the method of work, how to communicate.”*

Coordinating expectations category of practices consists of several sub-groups that are presented next:

- Defining criteria

D1: *“Primarily meet business representatives with analytics, this is the first point, first control when business needs to explain accurately and analytic need to understand the requirements. When they meet, they need to discuss all possible scenarios, all the risks, the point until the changes required by the third party are still possible <...>”*

- Informing the same level of authority

D6: *“During important communication, aligning essential questions it is important to involve the same level of authority from both sides.”*

- Digging deep into problems

D1: *“If I find it unclear the client is satisfied or not, he does not express himself emotionally, do not communicate <...> then I try to ask directly, simply go to that direction, specifically ask what work and what does not, but then with this precise questions you need to get on the road.”*

**Strategic:** Strategic personnel preferences are identified during the first meetings.

D1: *“That business requirements we need to find out in the first step with the executives.”*

**Support:** More attention is paid to adjust to the working style of the support level.

D5: *“Differences in expectations appear when there is lack of communication when at the beginning it is not set and identified who and how works, how frequently it is needed to send the communication to the client representatives <...>”*

**Technical:** No essential differences of practices noticed.

### 3.7 Differentiating communication

Previously it was already presented that different levels of employees are entitled to different communication. Moreover, this topic includes the comparison of emotional clients and how their behavior may impact cooperation with project managers.

Project managers admit that they pay more attention to strategic and support level communication. More efforts are made consisting of the message, preparing visual aids and alike as they find it important to create their professional image in the eyes of the client's management. However, this should not be understood as the lack of respect for technical employees, as rather than precise information they are distinguished with more emotionally enjoyable communication. Moreover, it was noticed that more discontent regarding technical details arises from strategic level employees due to lower understanding of the field.

Moreover, project managers share the type of stakeholders. Some of the clients are very emotional and could get carried away easily thus resulting in an emotional outburst, impolite behavior towards the company and the project team. Such an inability to manage one's emotions leads to project managers' personal dislikes and sometimes unconscious decisions. It was claimed that those clients who are very pleasant to work with and polite are tended to be taken care of additionally. When it is enjoyable to work with the client emotionally, the team and project manager are willing to invest additional time explaining to the client what is unclear, meeting more often physically, and so on. From the very first meetings with the clients' project managers, they try to determine the temper of the client's leader so that the communication and way of action could be selected accordingly. And even though clients of complex temperament are still clients and they are treated with professionalism and respect, the differentiation of treatment according to subconscious personal attractions might have an impact on the project.

D2: *“We try to notice if the client is a fierce type and could lose temper due to the smallest matter and then the world around him is collapsing, having evaluated such clients we try to communicate carefully. And with those clients, who are calmer, projects go smoother, easier, they understand that not always things go as it was planned.”*

Category of differentiating communication is constituted of the following practices:

- Assessing client's personality

D2: *“We try to notice whether the client is of the fierce type, whether he bursts from the slightest nuance that dissatisfies him and then the world around him collapses, having assessed such type of clients we try to communicate more carefully with them.”*

- Communicating according to the position

D2: *“We try to pay attention to the position, if it is a project manager, they are more focused on the realization of the project while technical employees are interested in how to get things done.”*

- Dealing with negative emotions

D4: *“If the emotions are negative it usually could make the project communication harder, increase avoidance of individual project members and that could become problematic regarding project’s success. Client’s dissatisfaction is resolved by finding out the reason behind it, indicating person that needs to be paid more attention and considering client’s needs and requests.”*

- Creating professional image

D3: *“It is intended that I want client’s executives to see me as responsible, professional, understanding what is being done, then I feel more evaluated and on it depends the project, how it will be processed. Considering the middle and lower-level employees I wish them to have positive experiences and less formal communication, but as well treat them with respect, communicate openly and positively.”*

**Strategic:** Strategic personnel complains more about technical details.

D2: *“Executives are less familiar with working everyday details, so they escalate more frequent problems and questions that are related to lack of understanding project details.”*

**Support:** Detailed project expectations are coordinated with support personnel.

D1: *“<...> if there are middle-level management who understands and works with the system or will execute the management of technical personnel, they are the most interested, they might need more detailed information to be presented.”*

**Technical:** No essential differences were noticed.

### **3.8 Focusing on project benefits**

The following practice is also directly related to expectations management. Project managers confirmed the necessity to focus on the project outcome and benefits while struggling with some processes or during decision making. It was indicated that the aim is that all parties involved in the project would be aware of the project benefit, not only informed about the project outcome but also understand why the project is needed, how the final result would affect each member individually. This

practice is favorable when the higher authority employees from the project need more persuasion from the project team. Thus, everyone is aware of the importance of the project, and being able to add to the outcome, helps build a sense of belonging within the team. Furthermore, project managers admit that often, according to the project need and the benefit ahead they need to rearrange their behavior and even leadership model.

D2: *“Yes, we explain how the project will help them effectively develop their works, how we as a company will be developing our processes, we explain to them the importance of the project that everything is not without reason.”*

The category was determined by the following repetitive sub-categories:

- Explaining project benefits

D7: *“This understanding why something is done, what that project will bring, what benefits it will generate for everyone, and how it will make the world better. So, basically project has to have some benefits, I think the most important thing is for everyone to understand that.”*

- Providing examples

D4: *“I also share with practical examples how suggested changes were adapted and implemented in other companies and what results it brought.”*

- Managing according to the project needs

D7: *“Well, for example, there are expectations to bring the result very quickly and you hope that supplier will not mess up, then there is a different vibe, you have to position yourself differently, you can be fun, friendly, but still when there is commitment at stake, you need to perform according to strict deadlines you have to position yourself respectively <...>”*

**Strategic:** For strategic employees we focus more on economic and time indicators to increase content with the project.

D2: *“For executives we try to explain how the project will benefit them economically, so that the client would take advantage and would be more interested and satisfied with the project<...>”*

**Support:** Focus is on the processes and the courses of the project.

D2: *“<...> for project managers we focus more on the process itself<...>”*

**Technical:** Getting all the details as much as needed.

D2: “<...> and do for the technical employees we attempt to explain everything in detail, so it would be easier for them to work.”

### **3.9 Adhering with company’s values**

The following practice topic is about company values and how they affect the project. Most of the project managers mentioned that throughout the process of the project they do not spend time rethinking the company values and if their work is done in accordance, however, all mentioned that after each project they send feedback forms for the client to answer. Naturally, the forms are different, the central idea is satisfaction with the project course, management, final result, and similar questions, however, there is a question about the company values and how would the project team be evaluated in this parameter. Project managers shared that clients recognize the project team as representatives of the company, if the project team demonstrates certain values, the image is created for all entities. Moreover, project managers admit that the more they follow the values of the company the better is cooperation with the client and the higher the quality of the product.

D5: “There was feedback that the communication is fluent, everything is declared, and successes, and misfortunes, and one of our values was honesty, so you can compare and make conclusions and even though they do not say it directly, but you know you work according to the values.”

The following topics systemized constituted *adhering with company’s values* category:

- Representing company

D2: “Generally speaking clients do not consider the project team itself. Frankly, they see the project team as an integral part of the company, and team’s behavior is equalized with company’s mentality so, that one small team could reflect it. So, if there are complaints from the client they are addressed to the whole company and its practice.”

- Collecting feedback

D8: “At the end of each project we collect the feedback and the client is asked to fill in the form and evaluate the whole project, its quality, communication, project management, values of the company. The next question is if the client would purchase the service next time.”

- Performing professionally



DI: *“I have not noticed that someone would express it so directly that hey you are working according to the company values, but when you know these values, you try to keep up with them and sometimes you compare yourself or your work with it.”*

**Strategic:** Interest regarding the values on the theoretical level.

D3: *“The leader in many cases is equally interested in the values of the project conduct, they in a big picture appear differently compared to the smaller decomposed results.”*

**Support:** No essential differences were noticed.

**Technical:** More feedback on how declared values are evident in the project technical details.

D3: *“The main feedback on the company values and visions come from the technical employees as they get to work and face project results directly.”*

### **3.10 Managing emotions**

Management of emotions captures plenty of the project manager's time and efforts. As presented in literature analysis, project managers are the main persons who are responsible for the orderliness and method of the project for it to be successful. Nevertheless, as much important is the emotional aspect of the project team and the client is. It is inevitable to face unexpected emotions towards the outcomes of the project, processes, changes, or stressful situations. Surplus of emotions occur not only from the client but alike in the project team and if not settled timely it could evolve into a complex conundrum.

Project managers reported that dealing with the emotional side of the team and the client starts from the very beginning of the project when during the kick-off meetings manager ascertains the patterns of the behavior and inclination for emotional conduct, the temper of the client. This information allows project managers to move forward with more efficient communication and actions. However, most of the project managers admit that they individually must remain calm throughout the project, no matter what kind of stressful situations arise or the extent of emotions during meetings. Their job is to keep the project moving, appease agitated involved parties. Interviewed persons revealed that to keep the project steady some meetings were terminated in the middle due to the high emotions and irrational decisions. Such practice helps to prevent more harm and allows people to unwind and examine situations from different perspectives. Though, natural emotions in many cases reveal the true feelings regarding some matters and provoke corresponding courses of action, so project managers also assess related information, particularly related to the client's strategic personnel as the decision could be highly affected by the emotions. Consequently, impressions shared by the technical client's employees that come from the leaders become quite important.

D3: *“If something did not work then usually you start to feel frustration from the others, or lag in communication. Then it starts, all parties frustrate, they start to get angry, there are some biting comments, and you start to feel like you need to explain yourself, that there is something wrong.”*

Managing emotions in the project managers practice appeared to be an important category and was composed of the following sub-categories:

- Controlling yourself

D1: *“Project manager has to control the situation and cannot let his emotions influence the project. Especially, when there are any disagreements between the client and company’s teams.”*

- Controlling the emotions of others

D1: *“In case of undesirable situations during the meetings we give time to rethink the situation, you cannot say that there is only on party correct, also if during the meeting there is an incredible number of emotions it might be necessary to end the meeting and give everybody time to calm down.”*

- Assessing client’s emotions

D7: *“<...> from those emotions follow specific conversations and discussions, meaning that the cards get opened, then you talk and realize that something is done wrongly, I think that those emotions, well those good and bad emotions show the real thing.”*

- Doing extra

D2: *“Clients who are more intelligent and do not attack in problematic situations, they know how to manage themselves emotionally, they are more pleasant to work with, and you want to explain them more in more detail, so that they would understand better, show it, make it easier, go the extra mile.”*

**Strategic:** Decision-taking persons’ emotions are scrutinized more as their emotions could have the greater power and effect on the project.

D3: *“Yes, feelings of executives are always assessed and treated more seriously because they have more significant access to our company’s leaders, so if the executive communicates to the company it is more important than technical employees’ communication.”*

**Support:** No essential differences were noticed.

**Technical:** Mostly their emotions and moods are observed trying to determine the reason and background.

D4: “<...> you can identify their emotions and moods regarding the project and its fulfillment. Usually, if the project owner is not satisfied this information can reach you through the employees, personal conversations, their moods, comments, and so on.”

### 3.11 Showing attention to client

Expectations of the project consist of many components and are concerned not only about the outcome of the project. Client choosing the vendor or contractor for the services takes decisions based as well on the implementation of the project, not only foreseen results. Thus, there are expectations related to the execution part. The processes and preferred ways of collaborating should be aligned at the beginning of the project. Moreover, for a fluent contribution project team should show due attention to the client. One of the most important actions identified was attentive listening to the client's problems, showing that the project team cares for these problems and takes action to solve the problem. Demonstrating that the client is important for the project team is crucial. Furthermore, stakeholders should be shown appropriate gratitude for their input into the development of the project, sharing information from the client's side, as even though the project result is ordered by the client, the daily workload that might be additional falls on the regular employees.

D1: “Sometimes it is more important to thank the support and technical employees for their work together with us, as for the leaders the most important is the result and that is it, while other employees get involved, get more work to do, and we cooperate with them the most.”

This category of practices was constituted by the following sub-categories:

- Listening attentively

D3: “I think it is important to listen to the expectations, hear the problems, I tend to take the responsibility and solve the problems, rather than ignoring that someone is unhappy and that is their problem.”

- Taking action

D2: “Just such clear examination of each question or request if there is something unclear, we ask to submit all the questions in writing, and we show that we raised these questions internally in the company and we think it is important. I noticed that this kind of communication with clients helps to calm down the client and quite sharply.”

- Making the client feel important

D5: *“I think that all bad emotions from client start to appear when he thinks that is not important to us and that we do not hear him. Then the best way of dealing with the emotions is to listen and come back with the feedback, solution for the problem, showing the attention.”*

**Strategic:** Important to attentively listen and respond with the appropriate course of action.

D2: *“With the executives, we try to behave carefully and try to listen to them, but as well we try to remain with clear company’s position <...>”*

**Support & technical:** Important to attentively listen and respond with the appropriate course of action, as well as to show due gratitude during and after the project for collaboration.

D3: *“It is important to hear the opinion of everyone so that they would feel important and required, that their opinion is not underestimated and that they would know the status, which of their ideas were taken into consideration.”*

Table 3 Results of the research analysis

Perceiving emotions		Facilitating thought	
<b>Coordinating expectations</b>	<b>Strategic.</b> Strategic personnel’s preferences are identified during the first meetings.	<b>Acknowledging efforts</b>	<b>Strategic.</b> Project managers are not focusing on thanking to strategic level employees
	<b>Support.</b> More attention paid to adjust to the working style of the support level.		<b>Support.</b> Project managers focus on support and technical level employees in regards of showing appreciation
	<b>Technical.</b> No essential differences of practices were noticed.		<b>Technical.</b> Project managers focus on support and technical level employees in regards of showing appreciation
		<b>Building confidence</b>	<b>Strategic.</b> The higher the rank in the company, the more confidence is essential.
			<b>Support. Confidence</b> is important as well as open communication, but the focus

	is lower than for strategic level stakeholders.
	<b>Technical.</b> Technical employees are fundamentally concerned with their own processes and their evaluation.

Source: Composed by the author.

Table 4 Results of the research analysis

Understanding emotions		Managing emotions	
<b>Behaving empathically</b>	<b>Strategic.</b> Communication with strategic level stakeholders is generally formal, professional, and is kept short and clear.	<b>Communicating professionally</b>	<b>Strategic.</b> Strategic level client's employees receive concise, clear information. If the communication to strategic level leaders from the client company receives information, accordingly the same level of leaders in the project manager's company should be informed accordingly.
	<b>Support.</b> Employees of this level receive more empathetic communication.		<b>Support.</b> Professional, more empathetic, and down to earth communication. Also, differs in the frequency and detail.
	<b>Technical.</b> Employees of this level receive more empathetic communication, also for technical personnel project managers often provide information and are not the point of contact for coordination of matters.		<b>Technical.</b> Professional, more empathetic, and down to earth communication. Also, differs in the frequency and detail.
<b>Compromising</b>	<b>Strategic.</b> In some cases, strategic level interests are taken more importantly than the other ranks.	<b>Differentiating communication</b>	<b>Strategic.</b> Strategic personnel complain more about technical details.

	<b>Support.</b> No essential differences were noticed.		<b>Support.</b> Detailed project expectations are coordinated with support personnel.
	<b>Technical.</b> No essential differences were noticed.		<b>Technical.</b> No essential differences were noticed.
<b>Focusing on project benefits</b>	<b>Strategic.</b> For strategic employees we focus more on economic and time indicators to increase content with the project.	<b>Managing emotions</b>	<b>Strategic.</b> Decision taking persons' emotions are scrutinized more as their emotions could have the greater power and effect for the project.
	<b>Support.</b> Focus is on the processes and the courses of the project.		<b>Support.</b> No essential differences were noticed.
	<b>Technical.</b> Getting all the details as much as needed.		<b>Technical.</b> Mostly their emotions and moods are observed trying to determine the reason and background.
<b>Adhering with values</b>	<b>Strategic.</b> Interest regarding the values on the theoretical level.	<b>Showing attention to clients</b>	<b>Strategic.</b> Important to attentively listen and respond with the appropriate course of actions.
	<b>Support.</b> No essential differences were noticed.		<b>Support.</b> Important to attentively listen and respond with the appropriate course of actions, as well to show due gratitude during and after the project for collaboration.
	<b>Technical.</b> More feedback on how declared values are evident in the project technical details.		<b>Technical.</b> Important to show due gratitude during and after the project for collaboration.

*Source:* Composed by the author.

# CONCLUSIONS

The aim of the thesis was to identify the practices employed by project managers dealing with stakeholders' expectations. The aim of the empirical study was to identify practices and create the categorization of the stakeholders' expectations management based on the emotional intelligence theory framework and to determine if there is a difference in using such practices by the stakeholders' positions in the company. Following the aim of the thesis the succeeding conclusions could be determined to answer the research question:

1. The academic literature review showed the amplitude of the project managers' abilities required to successfully lead the project. It emerged that among hard skills and soft skills emotional intelligence plays an important role in management. Having reviewed and compared emotional intelligence theories and respective fields of research, MSCEIT theory framework provided topics for practices to be considered. According to the literature stakeholders are rather influential parties of the project thus their management that is focusing on the expectations as part of the communication is vital. Yet, the previous research lacked distinguished categorization of project stakeholders' expectations management as well as handling according to the positions.
2. The academic literature provided the vision of the important aspects while dealing with the stakeholders and research studies' findings show that eleven categories of project stakeholders' expectations management could be determined from the experience of the experienced project managers:
  - Acknowledging efforts;
  - Behaving empathically;
  - Building confidence;
  - Communicating professionally;
  - Compromising;
  - Coordinating expectations;
  - Differentiating communication;
  - Focusing on project benefits;
  - Adhering with company's values;
  - Managing emotions;
  - Showing attention to the client.

The study suggests that such stakeholder expectation management practices result in better relationships among the project team, project manager, the client, and its company. The more qualitative cooperation and understanding of the other side's intentions lead to the superior project course and the outcomes.

3. The study results demonstrate that there are important differences in expectations management practices applied depending on the stakeholder's occupied position in a company. According to the shared knowledge by the project managers the strategic level is managed in a more considerate level, the information is provided in a concise manner and communication is mainly formal and professional. Project managers' goal is to perform extremely competently for the mentioned stakeholder group. Whereas support and technical level employees are regarded in a more ordinary way, the extent of the respect and professional behavior remains as for the strategic group, but they receive more empathetic communication and treatment. Usually, these groups get to know the project manager more on a personal level, which in some cases contributes to solving some emotional-related issues. Also, these two groups are highly considered for acknowledgment of efforts for the project after it is finished, which is unlikely for the strategic level. The difference between support and technical levels are that support group employees upraise more issues to the project manager than the technical group due to lower knowledge of details and technology-related matters, and technical employees are regarded by the project manager as not in the position to negotiate or coordinate but rather as a group for the exchange of the information.
4. From the results of the study, the following deduction was drawn that clients who lack emotional soundness, are more hotheaded, impolite, and tend to lose emotional control, behave drastically are inclined to receive different treatment from the project managers compared to the emotionally stable clients. Project managers attempt to reach successfully the goal of the project regardless of the client's emotional stability, personality, or other features, yet it is noticed that naturally for a more pleasant client there is an additional stimulant to do extra and help the client, emerge personal intention to root for the client so that not only the initial requirements would be met but that the result would actually be useful.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

**For the project managers:** as by the result of the study the best practices of project managers' stakeholder management were collected and developed into the categories, these practices could be used in further management of the project stakeholders, a specific plan of dealing with project stakeholders could be respectively created. Moreover, the aforementioned categorization could provide beneficial insights for beginners and junior project managers as the information is received from experienced project managers.

**For the project stakeholders (clients):** the results of the research show that a meaningful additional benefit could be lost in case of low emotional management and self-consciousness. Even though the set-up of the project is designed to bring the client's desired and required benefits, individual emotional abilities could matter and alternate a lot.

**For the leadership in the companies:** as suggested by this study results and academic literature review emotional intelligence is important in the professional life and as the work results and the atmosphere of the project could depend on the personnel's emotional abilities, additional actions could be made to raise more the awareness of its importance and likewise pay more attention for the respective abilities improvement.

### Strengths and limitations

Expectation management is an important part of the project and even though this area has been analyzed previously this study narrowed the scope of the area to the stakeholder's group segment – client and their expectation management and categorization of the management practices. While the research contributes to the project management field it also faces certain limitations.

Firstly, the limitation occurs in the research design as the emotional intelligence theory was chosen for the framework to map the practices, consequently, the questionnaire and the analysis of the results were performed based on MSCEIT theory. However, to deepen the research and improve the validity of the data the interviewed project managers' emotional intelligence could be assessed further establishing their practices according to the results of the emotional intelligence test.

Secondly, the interviewed persons professional background does not represent the whole management area as the interviewed persons come from three sectors and their location background is Lithuania, therefore for future analysis the research could be supplemented and extended to either cover the majority of the sectors in order to provide the extensive data and results or to focus on the particular sector and broaden the topic. Moreover, the study could be extended to other countries' management

examples to reveal if there exist any differences comparing to the management examples in Lithuania, thus contributing to the internationality of the project management.

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# ANNEXES

## Annex 1

### *Interview protocol*

Interviu numeris:

Informantas:

Profesija:

Patirtis dirbant su projektais:

Gyvenamoji vietovė:

Interviu vedėjas:

Apklauskos vieta:

Ypatingi pastebėjimai:

Interviu data:

Interviu trukmė:

Prieš pradėdant interviu dar kartą noriu padėkoti už sutikimą dalyvauti šiame tyrime. Prašau patvirtinkite, kad sutinkate, jog pokalbis bus įrašomas.

Įrašyta informacija bus laikoma konfidencialiai, nebus niekur viešinama nei vardas, nei įmonė, kurioje dirbate. Tyrimo tikslais bus panaudota tik sakiniai, frazės, tam tikri žodžiai, kurie bus išversti į anglų kalbą, o pateiktos citatos užkoduotos.

Surinkta medžiaga bus transkribuota ir nagrinėjama pagal tyrimo modelį, sudaromos subkategorijos ir kategorijos, bei ieškomos sąsajos, pasikartojantys reiškiniai ir praktikos.

Atliekamo tyrimo problematika yra identifikuoti bei suklasifikuoti projektų vadovų elgesio praktikas valdant projekto suinteresuotųjų šalių – kliento lūkesčius pagal pozicijas remiantis emocinio intelekto kategorijomis.

Mano tyrimo schema yra ši lentelė, pagal kurią vėliau bus atliekamos sąsajos, daromos išvados ir rekomendacijos.

	<b>Perceiving emotions</b>	<b>Facilitating though</b>	<b>Understanding emotions</b>	<b>Managing emotions</b>
<b>Strategic</b>				
<b>Support</b>				
<b>Technical</b>				

Prieš pradėdant interviu prašau atsakykite į šiuos klausimus apie save:

- Kiek laiko dirbate su projektais?
- Kokia šiuo metu jūsų pozicija įmonėje?
- Ar dirbate su tokiais projektais, kurių metu tenka bendrauti su daugiau nei vienu suinteresuotuoju asmeniu iš kliento pusės, bei tie asmenys yra skirtingose pozicijose?

### **Interviu klausimai**

1. Kokiais kitais būdais nei rašytinė komunikacija nustatate, ar klientas yra patenkintas ar ne projektu? Ar imiesi papildomų veiksmų tai nustatyti?
2. Kokiais būdais nustatate ar klientas jaučiasi gerai, patogiai dėl projekto komandos ir esamos projekto situacijos? Ar elgiamasi skirtingai su kliento atstovais jei yra skirtingose pozicijose, tenka su jais bendrauti ne tuo pačiu metu?
3. Kaip pastebi kliento emocijas, jausmus, kurie gali turėti įtakos tavo projektui? Ar veiksmai, kurių imiesi priklauso nuo to darbuotojas iš kliento pusės yra vadovaujančioje ar techninio darbuotojo pozicijoje?
4. Kaip elgiesi, kad klientui sukurtumei priklausymo projektui ir pasitikėjimo jausmą? Ar šios elgesio praktikos skiriasi pagal pozicijas?
5. Ar pastebi, kaip tavo projekto įgyvendinimas pagal tavo įmonės vertybes paveikia klientą? Jei taip, kaip? Jei ne, kokiomis vertybėmis remiesi dirbdamas su klientu?

6. Ar kada nors teko dėl kliento emocijų sustabdyti arba pakeisti komunikaciją ar veiksmų planą? Ar tokiose situacijose svarbu kokioje pozicijoje yra klientą atstovaujantis asmuo? Jeigu ne, kaip elgiesi jeigu klientas yra nepatenkintas projektu?
7. Kas tau padeda valdyti projekto suinteresuotąsias šalis – klientą, jo emocijas, pavadinkite pagal kliento poziciją.
8. Kaip suderini skirtingus lūkesčius tų, kurie yra įtraukti į projektą iš kliento pusės? Ar yra tekę pastebėti, kad vadovo ir techninio darbuotojo lūkesčiai yra skirtingi? Kaip tokiu atveju elgiamasi?
9. Ar tavo asmeninės emocijos kada nors yra paveikusios projekto eigą dėl kultūrinių tavo ir kliento skirtumų? Kaip elgiesi jeigu atsiranda kultūriniai skirtumai? Ar projekto eiga kada nors buvo paveikta dėl kliento emocijų dėl projekto?
10. Kokias emocijas stengiesi sukurti klientui? Kaip jos skiriasi pagal poziciją?