

# Gender Stereotypes among Future Managers

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**Abstract:** Gender role stereotypes in our society assign typical characteristics to men and women, which often complement each other as opposites, determining our expectations of individual women and men and our actions towards them in specific situations (Karsten, 2006). Gender inequality has been linked to humanity since ancient times. Sociological research at the beginning of the third millennium (CVVM Research November 2006) found that "gender conservatism", clinging to traditional views and gender roles, still prevails in the Czech Republic.

At the same time, empirical findings suggest that the Czech population is now generally in favour of gender equality in the area of reconciling work and family (i.e. an egalitarian model). But is this really the case in our Czech conditions and within Czech universities?

This paper is about the issue of future managers. Generations influencing or contributing to gender equality or inequality. The results summarize ideas about what men and women managers should be, what qualities they should have and what values they should cherish.

The data obtained through a questionnaire survey among students of bachelor's and master's degree programs of the Faculty of Economics of the University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice were evaluated using the semantic differential technique. It was found that the students' view of the female manager as well as the male manager is very balanced. The curves are around the mean values. There was a very slight disparity in creativity, charisma, leadership and planning and activity skills in the evaluation of women managers. On the other hand, there is a marginally noticeable improvement in the view of traits for control ability, tolerance and empathy. For male managers, there was a slight negative trend for some traits. These are control ability, empathy and loyalty, humility, openness and assertiveness, sense of humour and motivation. Slightly positive developments occur for composure, charisma and communication. It was found that students are not influenced by stereotypical ideas about the managerial position. The overall view reveals the balance of opinion of students in all the necessary characteristics of a manager.

**Keywords:** gender stereotypes, women and men managers, student's generation influencing gender equality or inequality, qualities and values of managers

**JEL Classification:** M1, M12

## 1 Introduction

Gender role stereotypes in our society assign typical characteristics to men and women, which often complement each other as opposites, determining our expectations of individual women and men and our actions towards them in specific situations (Karsten, 2006). Gender inequality has been linked to humanity since ancient times. However, the situation has not always been favourable to one particular gender. Matriarchy is characteristic for the prehistoric era. Over time, however, there has been a transition to agriculture and pastoralism. This is the moment of men.

Men, women are stereotypically ascribed certain qualities, abilities and characteristics of "typically feminine" and "typically masculine". Sociological research at the beginning of the third millennium (CVVM Research November 2006) found that "gender conservatism", clinging to traditional views and gender roles, still prevails in the Czech Republic. About 70% of Czech men and women believe that a man should be the breadwinner. Half think that only he should have a career, half think both and half a percent think only the woman should. The demands of women's education and their

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own professional careers are not questioned by most people in our country. However, beliefs about the need for their own careers are weakest in periods of increased demands for childcare and child-rearing.

At the same time, empirical findings suggest that the general preferences of the Czech population today favour gender equality in the area of reconciling work and family, i.e. an egalitarian model (Širovátka, Hora, et al., 2008).

However, this conclusion is not entirely consistent with the findings on gender representation among managerial positions.

Managerial functions are still dominated by men. Globally, women held only 29% of senior management positions in 2020 (Thornton: Tremmel, Wahl, 2023) and with increasing hierarchical positions in organizations women's representation decreases (Mercer: Tremmel, Wahl, 2020). Women have to use more energy as men while building up their careers.

Gender stereotyping is considered to be a significant issue obstructing the career progressions of women in management especially. The continuation of minimal representation and participation of women in top-level management positions is visible (World Economic Forum, 2017).

Various research studies have produced lists of barriers, which are either the results of stereotype dominating the society or form the part of the labour market, which, as a rule, generates more suitable working conditions for men than women. High levels of demand on time and proficiency are typical for functions of a manager, posing more restraints for women than men. How is to be perceived? There are lots of companies still lagging behind in establishing equal opportunities for women, who are also simultaneously required to meet the role of a mother taking care of her held, household. Under the weight of the circumstances they are forced decline such professions, which could substantially limit them. Mostly, women have to chose from a typically family, or career-bound, option, or adapt to a typically „male“ way of work. And if, despite of all the facts mentioned earlier, women ultimately manage to take the position, their work is much less appreciated than those of the men and are offered posts in lower levels of management (Gazdagová, Fischlová, 2006).

Leaders are mainly seen to have masculine traits and characteristics similar to men and not to women (Koenig et al., 2011). Thus, it is easier for men to move up companies' hierarchies to leadership positions (Eagly and Karau, 1991; Badura et al., 2018), whereas women face a glass ceiling that is hard to break through (Cotter et al., 2001).

Stereotypically, men are ascribed agentic characteristics describing them as aggressive, ambitious, dominant, forceful, independent, self-sufficient, self-confident, and prone to act as a leader. Stereotypes regarding women lie in communal characteristics portraying them as affectionate, helpful, kind, sympathetic, interpersonally sensitive, nurturant, and gentle (Koburday et al., 2019).

There seem to be changes in leadership stereotypes over time; however, they are rather small (Eagly et al., 2020). Studies analyzing obituaries over a period of several decades found a change in stereotypes ascribed to male and female leaders, indicating that stereotypes of male leaders come closer to stereotypes of female leaders and stereotypes of female leaders come closer to stereotypes of male leaders (Hartl et al., 2013). Leaders are nowadays seen to be more androgynous (Kark et al., 2012) and additionally hold stereotypical feminine characteristics (e.g., individualized consideration in transformational leadership suggesting that leaders should be empathic with employees' needs; (Vinkenburt et al., 2011).

But is this really the case in our Czech conditions and in a Czech university?

This paper is about the issue of future managers. Generations influencing or contributing to gender equality or inequality. The results summarise the ideas of what men and women managers should be, what qualities they should have and what values they should honour. The aim of the paper is to identify and compare possible stereotypical views of women and men in management positions by future managers, represented by university students of economics.

## 2 Methods

The data obtained by field collection were evaluated using the semantic differential technique. In this particular case, the sample was female and male students of Business Management and Economics study field whose stereotypical beliefs and biases were matched across years. The results are drawn from a thesis entitled "Gender stereotyping in future managers" (Fišerová, 2013). The theoretical background and practical treatment are compared with the current available information in the world literature and thus set in an appropriate framework. Secondary research that complements the

basic research mentioned above is the research of the Institute of Sociology of the CAS, v. v. i. Gender segregation of the labour market (Křížková, Sloboda, 2009).

The students were surveyed in November of the winter semester of 2012. 45 students of Bachelor's studies and 76 students of Master's studies participated in the survey, in total 121 students. The first year of the Bachelor's programme is not included due to the higher instability of the students, which allowed for a more practical comparison of the already more established two years of both the Bachelor's and the follow-up programme. All students were asked to complete the questionnaire anonymously. For optimal evaluation, gender, type of study as well as year of study were required.

The research was focused on identifying and comparing the different stereotypical view of women and men managers through the eyes of future managers, students of the aforementioned field. Comparisons are made both within and between years. For this step, it was necessary to perform a semantic differential.

According to Ferjenčík (2000), the semantic differential is characterized by words and concepts - as abstractions and products of human thinking - existing also in a certain psychological space, which we could call semantic space. To locate a concept - to find out where it lies - will mean, by analogy to physical objects, to find its place in semantic space, in the space of meaning. We know that human life experience is unrepeatable. It is therefore truth-like that the same concept will be located in different places in the semantic space of two people.

Any concept is placed in its own semantic space by considering that concept primarily from three aspects: the evaluative dimension, the potency dimension and the activity dimension.

The most powerful is the evaluative dimension. This can be simplistically characterized as the assessment and (placement of) a concept on the basis of its evaluation as "good" or "bad" or "nice" or "ugly". The means of positioning a concept is through the use of bipolar adjectives (good-bad, happy-sad).

The second dimension is the dimension of potency (or the dimension of power). This is represented by adjectives such as big - small, strong - weak, etc.

The activity dimension is represented by evaluations in terms of such aspects as fast - slow, active - passive, hot - cold.

The methodology of identifying the location of concepts in the semantic space of an individual (the so-called semantic differential - SD) relies on a series of bipolar adjectives representing the three dimensions. With the help of these assets, the subject "evaluates" a given concept by marking the degree to which a given adjective characterizes the concept under consideration. The selection of adjectives for the semantic differential should meet two requirements - representativeness and relevance.

The semantic differential is also viewed from the perspective of the pioneer Peabody. Peabody (1985) developed a measure assessing whether people are evaluated positively or negatively without asking participants directly about their evaluations. To obtain this evaluative component, ratings of two bi-polar adjective pairs describing the same characteristic with opposing evaluations are combined. For example, the first adjective pair is extravagant vs. thrifty and the matching second pair is stingy vs. generous. Thrifty as well as stingy describe a person who spends little money, whereas extravagant and generous describe a person who spends a lot of money. Although, thrifty and generous describe opposites, both are evaluated positively, while extravagant and stingy also describe opposites but are evaluated negatively. Thus, these ratings have an underlying evaluative component which can be determined by combining the ratings of the two matching adjective pairs.

Collecting implicit evaluations might lead to evaluations less influenced by gender stereotypes than explicit evaluations. To this end, the semantic differential of Peabody (1985) with its evaluative component is used in the present paper. Since men and women might differ in their implicit evaluation, gender differences are also examined.

The semantic differential was used for the final scaling of the students' stereotypical gender representations. First, however, it was necessary to construct a questionnaire that was presented to second and third year students of the bachelor's degree type and also first and second year students of the master's follow-up degree type.

The questionnaire includes adjectives corresponding to the position of manager. On each line, a given characteristic is depicted in a positive and negative light. The adjectives are arranged in such a way that the respondent does not answer in a monotonous way (both sides of the questionnaire contain positive and negative adjectives). Those whose values are written in reverse order are highlighted in grey.

The first year of the Bachelor's programme is not included due to the higher instability of the students, which allowed a more practical comparison of the already more established two years of both the Bachelor's and the follow-up programme.

All students were asked to complete the questionnaire anonymously. For optimal evaluation, gender, type of study as well as year of study were required.

### 3 Research results

With the help of semantic differential, it was found that both undergraduate and graduate students' view of a woman manager is very balanced. Both curves are around the mean values with slight fluctuations towards the more positive ones. There is a very slight disapproval for creativity, charisma, leadership and planning ability and activity. Conversely, a slightly noticeable improvement in the view of traits is for control, tolerance and empathy. Both undergraduate and graduate students agree in their overall view of the female manager. Stereotypical ideas have no place here.

The bachelor and master students' view of the male manager is also balanced. The students' view is also within the middle values

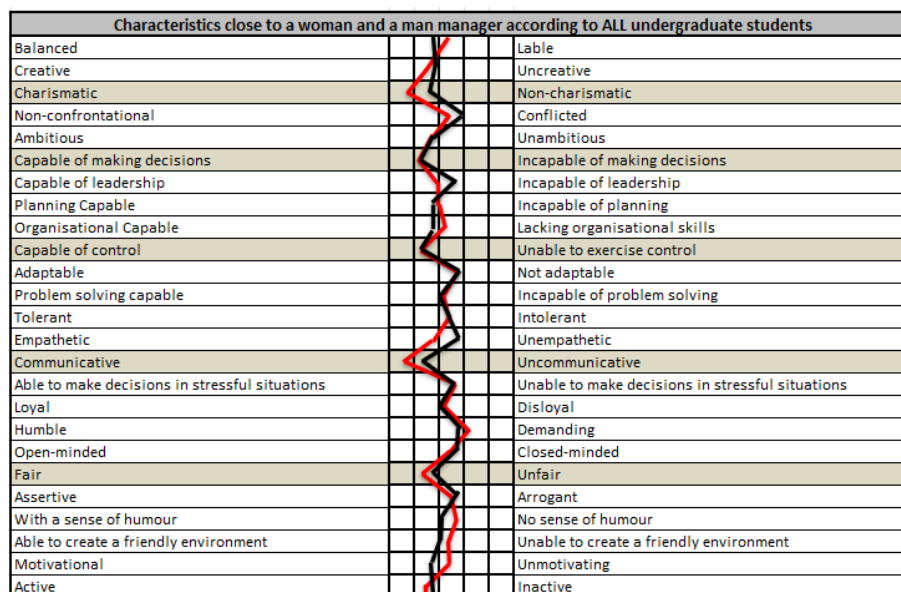
There is a slightly negative trend for some characteristics. These are the ability to control, empathy and loyalty, humility, openness and assertiveness, sense of humour and motivation. Slightly positive developments occur for equanimity, charisma and communication.

Students are not influenced by stereotypical ideas about the managerial position. The overall view reveals a balance of students' opinions in all the necessary characteristics of a manager.

#### 3.1 Summary view of Bachelor students

The red curve, plotted in the graph on this page, represents a female manager. The black curve represents a male manager. This is an aggregate view of all undergraduate students. The questionnaire was completed by a total of 45 students. The graphical representation was done using scales.

**Graph 1** Male and female managers in the eyes of undergraduate students



Source: Own processing

In the chart above we see a very balanced view of the male and female manager indeed. It shows that young students do not suffer from strong preconceptions about gender characteristics in relation to performing a managerial function.

The female manager possesses more developed qualities such as charisma, communicativeness and fairness. The curve of male manager is around the mean values of the graph. His better qualities are sense of humor, ability to create a friendly environment and motivation.

The graph shows that the female manager's positive ratings are predominant. The strongest qualities of a woman manager are charisma, communicativeness, decision making ability and fairness. These characteristics replicate the views of both undergraduate classes. Decision-making ability and control are also highly ranked. The remaining managerial skills are also seen positively.

'Demandingness' was rated as the weakest aspect of women managers. Which on the other hand could also be seen in a positive light.

Chart 1 depicting the view of the male manager shows that again qualities such as charisma, decision making and control, communicativeness, fairness play a major role.

In the overall view, we are again more in the positive part of the semantic differential. However, qualities such as conflict, maladjustment, inability to empathise and arrogance are already past the middle.

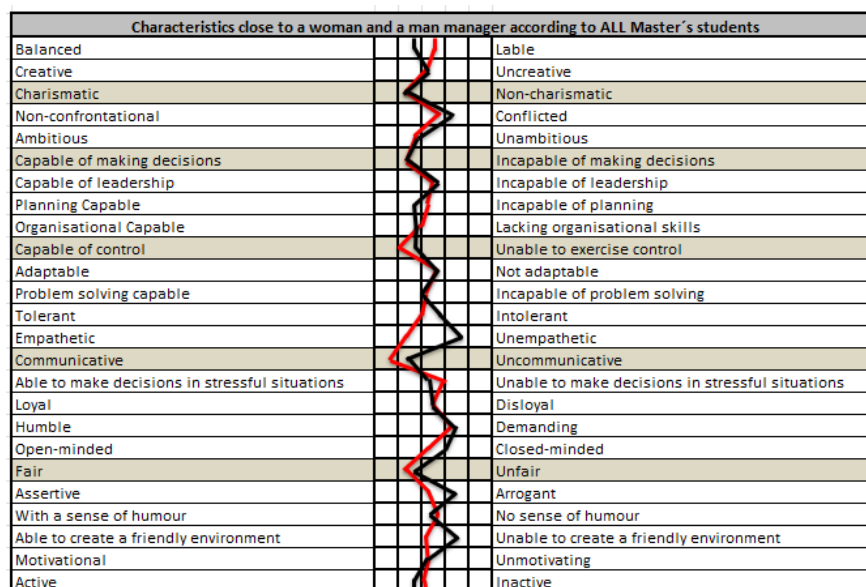
In a preliminary comparison of male and female managers through the eyes of younger students, it can be noted that more negative characteristics were found in the male manager. However, the differences are not so marked.

Basic management skills are equal for both genders. Although the overall picture is indeed very flat, the female manager curve is generally closer to the positive values.

### 3.2 Summary view of Master's students

The red curve represents a female manager, the black curve represents a male manager. A total of 76 master's students completed the questionnaire.

**Graph 2** Male and female managers in the eyes of Master's students



Source: Own processing

The chart above clearly captures a fairly balanced view of the female and male manager, especially in the first half of the chart where the two curves are almost identical. The biggest difference occurs in the ability - empathy, which is inherent in the female manager.

The manager's curve is closer to a positive value only for equanimity and activity. The woman manager excels in the ability to control, communication and fairness.

In the second part of the graph, the curves are already intertwined, but the red curve of the female manager is closer to the left positive part of the graph for most of the time.

The female manager is more in the middle in the eyes of all master's students. Only a few fluctuations can be seen. The strongest qualities of a woman manager are communicative, charisma, decision making, control and fairness.

The borderline qualities are evident as composure, creativity, leadership, planning, adaptability, problem solving, loyalty, openness, assertiveness, sense of humor, ability to create a friendly environment, motivation and activity. Thus, most of the traits occur on the borderline between positivity and negativity.

Negative traits are conflict, maladjustment, inability to make decisions under pressure and demandingness.

For the male manager, again, we are more around the middle values. However, there are more negative characteristics.

Positive qualities, according to the above chart, would include charisma, decision-making ability, communicativeness, fairness and proactivity. Basic managerial skills such as planning ability, organizational skills and control ability are also ranked very well.

Around the mid-range are creativity, leadership ability, adaptability, loyalty, sense of humor, and ability to motivate.

Negative qualities appear to be conflict, "un-empathy", arrogance, demandingness and inability to create a friendly environment.

Again, the view of male and female managers is not very different from that of the students of the follow-up study. For both genders, we are rather around the middle values. Even the positive values are very similar. However, we find more negative characteristics in the male manager.

### 3.3 Comparison of Bachelor and Master students' perspectives on female managers

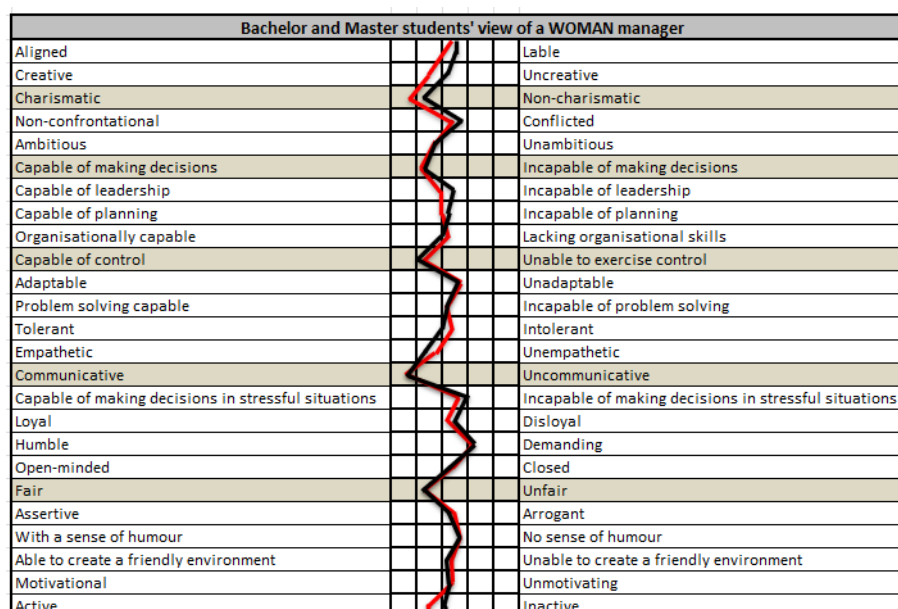
The red curve shows the view of female managers by undergraduate students. The black curve represents the view of all master's students.

The graph on the following page shows that the view of both bachelor and master students on a woman manager is indeed very balanced. Both curves are generally around the mean values with slight fluctuations towards the more positive ones.

There is a very slight disparity for creativity, charisma, leadership ability and planning and activity. But this is really only a very slight upset of negative trends. On the other hand, there is a slightly noticeable improvement in the view of traits for control, tolerance and empathy.

It is gratifying that both undergraduate and graduate students agree in their overall view of the woman manager. There were only slight deviations; stereotypical prejudices about the woman manager have no place here.

**Graph 3** A woman manager in the eyes of Bachelor and Master's students



Source: Own processing

### 3.4 Comparison of Bachelor and Master students' perspectives on male managers

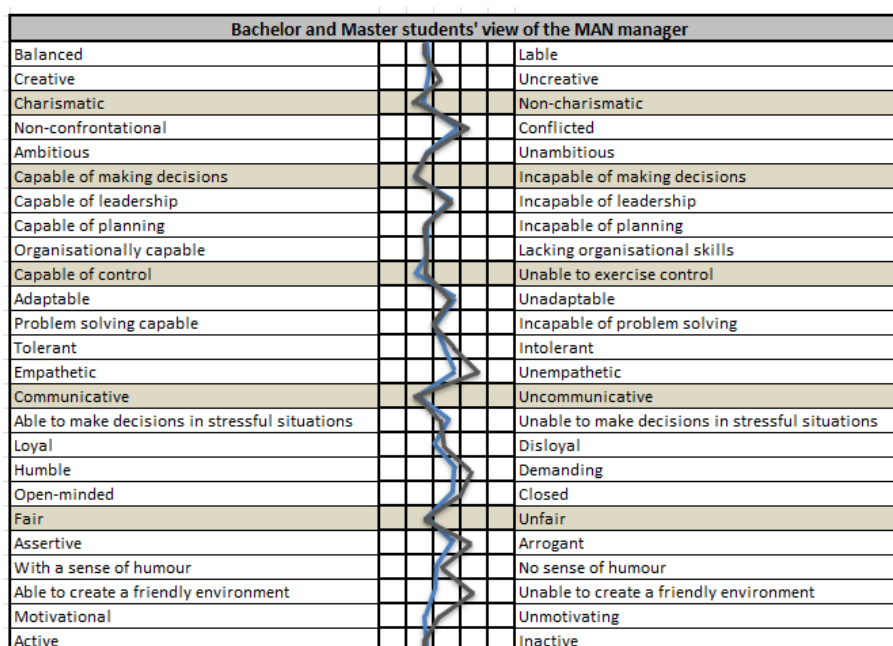
The blue curve captures the view of male managers by undergraduate students. The grey curve depicts the view of master's students on a male manager.

The view of undergraduate and graduate students on the male manager is also balanced, as the graph on the following page clearly shows. The view of male students is also within the middle values of the graph.

On closer examination, we find that the blue curve depicting the view of undergraduate students is slightly negatively trending for some characteristics. These are controllability, empathy and loyalty, humility, openness and assertiveness, sense of humour and motivation. Slightly positive development occurs for composure, charisma and communication.

However, the overall view reveals a balance in the students' opinion in all the necessary characteristics of a manager, including his/her basic skills. Students are also not affected by preconceived notions about the managerial position.

**Graph 4** Male manager in the eyes of Bachelor and Master's students



Source: Own processing

### 3.5 Comparison of Bachelor's and Master's results

*The view of both undergraduate and graduate students of a woman manager is very balanced indeed. Both curves are generally around the mean values with slight fluctuations towards the more positive ones.*

*There is a very slight disparity for creativity, charisma, leadership and planning ability and activity. But this is really only a very slight negative development. On the other hand, there is a slightly noticeable improvement in the view of traits for control, tolerance and empathy.*

*It is gratifying that both undergraduate and graduate students agree in their overall view of the woman manager. There were only slight variations, stereotypical prejudices about women managers have no place here.*

*The view of male managers by undergraduate and graduate students is also balanced. The students' view is also within the middle values.*

*There is a slightly negative trend for some characteristics. These are the ability to control, empathy and loyalty, humility, openness and assertiveness, sense of humour and motivation. There is a slightly positive development in equanimity, charisma and communication.*

However, the overall view reveals a balance of students' opinion in all the necessary characteristics of a manager, including his basic skills. Students are not influenced by stereotypical ideas of the managerial position as we see in the table below.

**Tab 1** Final comparison Bachelor vs. Master's

| Resulting comparison Bachelor vs. Master's students |                      |                            |
|-----------------------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|
| Bachelor and Master student's view of WOMEN         | Balanced             | Both curves in mean values |
|                                                     | slight deterioration | creativity                 |
|                                                     |                      | charisma                   |
|                                                     |                      | leadership                 |
|                                                     |                      | planning                   |
|                                                     |                      | activity                   |
|                                                     | slight improvement   | control                    |
|                                                     |                      | tolerance                  |
|                                                     |                      | empathy                    |
|                                                     |                      |                            |
| Bachelor and Master student's view of MAN           | Balanced             | Both curves in mean values |
|                                                     | slight deterioration | control                    |
|                                                     |                      | empathy                    |
|                                                     |                      | Loyalty                    |
|                                                     |                      | humility                   |
|                                                     |                      | openness                   |
|                                                     |                      | assertiveness              |
|                                                     |                      | sense of humour            |
|                                                     |                      | motivation                 |
|                                                     | slight improvement   | equanimity                 |
|                                                     |                      | charisma                   |
|                                                     |                      | communication              |

Source: Own processing

#### 4 Conclusions

The final view of Bachelor and Master's students of the woman manager is balanced. Both curves generally move around the mean values with slight adjustments towards the more positive. Bachelor and Master's students' view of the male manager is also balanced, it also moves within the mean values.

One would expect the view to be distorted. Not surprisingly, although our times are associated with the proclamation of equality between men and women, it is here, for example, that the most publicised pay gap between the sexes performing the same job appears. However, Křížková and Pavlica (2004) also refute the mistaken belief that this is a natural situation, where men are the decisive economic and political force in society, while women are more involved in 'complementary' activities such as creating a social base and raising children.

At the same time, Křížková and Sloboda (2009) make it clear that gender segregation of the labour market is significantly related not only to the wage gap between men and women, but also to the currently rising unemployment in the context of the economic crisis, which has different dynamics and consequences for women and men as a result of segregation, and last but not least is one of the causes of the feminisation of poverty on a local and global scale. Despite of the above mentioned dogmas, the hypothesis has been confirmed. The consensus of stereotypical views of male and female managers doesn't lead without exception to gender preference for specific properties in all classes.

According to the above results obtained using the semantic differential, it is possible to confirm that students of Business Management and Economics do not suffer from stereotypical images of male and female manager. They do not automatically assume that a man will have all executive managerial skills while the woman manager will be lacking in them. Yes, some qualities are confirmed as typical for a woman - empathy, communication, and for men - activity, but the students' opinion develops with the obtained knowledge.

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