

# e-mentor

DWUMIESIĘCZNIK SZKOŁY GŁÓWNEJ HANDLOWEJ W WARSZAWIE  
WSPÓŁWYDAWCA: FUNDACJA PROMOCJI I AKREDYTACJ KIERUNKÓW EKONOMICZNYCH

2022, nr 2 (94)



Syper-Jędrzejak, M., Ulrych, W., & Oltra, V. (2022). Understanding the declared knowledge and readiness to apply Corporate Social Responsibility of Polish and Spanish business students. *e-mentor*, 2(94), 8–18. <https://doi.org/10.15219/em94.1564>



Marzena  
Syper-  
Jędrzejak



Wojciech  
Ulrych



Victor  
Oltra

# Understanding the declared knowledge and readiness to apply Corporate Social Responsibility of Polish and Spanish business students

## Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to compare two groups of business students from Poland and Spain regarding their declared knowledge and readiness to apply the principles of corporate social responsibility (CSR). The research was conducted in 2018 among students of two selected universities: the Faculty of Management at the University of Lodz in Poland (UL) and the Faculty of Economics at the University of Valencia (UV). A literature review was performed to compare the CSR education programs at both faculties and to investigate students' opinions about CSR. The Chi<sup>2</sup> independence test was used to find any statistical differences between the two researched groups. In total, 607 students took part in the study. The findings revealed that UV students declare themselves to be better prepared than UL students to make sufficient CSR-based employment decisions. It was also found that UV students more frequently declared a readiness to take CSR measures such as encouraging the company's management to take an interest in CSR, or to personally promote CSR activities in the company. UV students also declared a willingness to work in a company guided by CSR values and activities even for lower remuneration. The findings may be affected by social as well as economic contextual factors and they make it possible to formulate concrete recommendations on how to improve students' awareness of CSR ideas.

**Keywords:** social corporate responsibility, higher education, business students, Poland, Spain

## Introduction

The term *corporate social responsibility* (CSR) means the incorporation of social and environmental issues into corporate business activities. The definition of CSR is ambiguous and has been interpreted in many ways. Analysis of almost forty definitions of CSR has shown that despite the obvious differences, at the root of most CSR approaches is a company's environmental, social and economic pillars together with the need to engage stakeholders (Dahlsrud, 2008). The definition of CSR states that companies must not only pursue their main goal – to maximize profits, but also contribute to the well-being of society through voluntary efforts. CSR is growing in importance on a global scale and it is becoming increasingly vital for companies to engage in socially responsible activities to support the growth of their business (Barauskaite & Streimikiene, 2021, p. 278). Activities falling within CSR can be divided into those that are internal and external. The internal activities include shaping the organizational culture, human resources management, occupational health and safety, resource management, and the company's impact on the natural environment. The external activities concern relations with business partners, suppliers, recipients, public institutions, shareholders and customers, in order to benefit local communities and the natural environment (European Commission, 2001; Rok, 2004, p. 20). Both external and internal CSR activities of the company are important for employees and job applicants (Agnihotri & Bhattacharya, 2021; Zaleśna, 2018).

There is a lot of empirical research on students' attitudes towards the idea of ethics in business, or more specifically the issue of CSR (including Alonso-Almeida et al., 2015;

Marzena Syper-Jędrzejak, University of Lodz, Poland, <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0559-1332>

Wojciech Ulrych, University of Lodz, Poland, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9477-2479>

Victor Oltra, University of Valencia, Spain, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5009-4127>

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Elias, 2004; Eweje & Brunton, 2010; Larrán et al., 2018; Lämsä et al., 2008). On one hand, effective teaching of business ethics at universities (Dellaportas et al., 2006) provides an opportunity to shape the future behavior of business professionals (Marnburg, 2003). Clearly, however, the results of research on the impact of ethical education, awareness and ethical behavior are ambiguous (Neureuther et al., 2004; Tormo-Carbó et al., 2016; Tormo-Carbó et al., 2019). Student belief in CSR does not automatically mean that they would observe CSR principles in practice (Dearman & Beard, 2009).

On the other hand, the degree of involvement with the company largely depends on how young people are treated and which CSR principles are grounded in the company. Various publications indicate that this implementation of socially responsible activities translates into increased motivation, productivity and willingness to stay with the company (Burton & Goldsby, 2010; Gadomska-Lila, 2012). Moreover, in companies which are socially responsible towards their employees, a reduction in absenteeism and personnel turnover was found (Kim et al., 2010).

Taking all of the above into consideration, the aim of this paper is to compare two groups of business students from Poland and Spain regarding their declared knowledge and readiness to apply CSR principles. They will soon become either managers or employees responsible for effecting implementation of CSR ideas.

This comparison between the CSR approach of business students from the Faculty of Management at the University of Lodz (UL) in Poland and the Faculty of Economics at the University of Valencia (UV) in Spain is intended to shed light on CSR teaching and students' declared CSR knowledge and their readiness to apply CSR. The reason we have analyzed these two selected faculties is because of the similarities in their educational profiles. They educate future business-oriented managers and workers. Both of these state universities educate students in various fields of knowledge, with comparable numbers of research staff and structures organized into basic departments and specialist units.

We should compare CSR declarations made by Spanish students with those of their Polish counterparts. This could draw attention to the do's and don'ts of undertaking CSR activities and changes within BA faculty programs, and lead the way for further Polish CSR-oriented practices. Undoubtedly, the present economic state of these countries matters in this regard.

The main [hypothesis, supposition, assumption] was formulated in the following manner: the greater presence of CSR issues in Spanish universities and within public debate, together with broader use of market-oriented CSR practices, has much to do with Spanish students who are more acquainted with CSR. As a result, they are more self-confident and ready to take CSR measures in comparison to their Polish counterparts. The following research questions should be considered:

1. How do students assess themselves regarding their declared knowledge of CSR in terms of career decisions?

2. Do students think that a company's achievements in this area can be measured and that CSR itself can be used in various companies, regardless of their size?
3. How well are both Polish and Spanish students prepared to take CSR measures in terms of choosing an employer or promoting the idea of CSR in the workplace?

The research was carried out using a questionnaire originally developed for this purpose. The presented research had some limitations. Firstly, the sample of the two faculties tested is small and so was not representative in statistical terms. However, there are very few Polish – Spanish comparative studies on CSR, especially within the context of a business and economy study (Dziwiński et al., 2015; Klimkiewicz & Oltra, 2017; Lulewicz-Sas, 2013). Secondly, we take it for granted that in general students find CSR to be important for their career decisions. We only asked questions regarding declared, not factual knowledge. Many respondents are still learning CSR.

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### Literature review: Polish and Spanish students on CSR issues

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Effective education in the field of CSR is fundamental to the development and understanding of the concept and its treatment as part of the corporate strategy. Soon students will become employees of companies, specialists and managers responsible for the shape of CSR practice in business. The number of university business and management courses containing elements of CSR in developed countries is still growing, with the USA being the leading example (Bridges & Wilhelm, 2008; Christensen et al., 2007; Evans & Marcal, 2005; Karbowski et al., 2006; Kozubek, 2016).

Poland is currently following the global trend of including aspects of CSR in higher education programs. Bearing this in mind, managers should be able to respond to various moral dilemmas and take action in the fields of business ethics and CSR (Gasparski, 2008; Rojek-Nowosielska, 2013). Most university economic programs offer courses and subjects containing elements of ethics, social aspects of management, and business ethics. In addition, management studies at master's degree level conform to the basic government-regulated study programs, and business ethics has been included as one of the five basic subjects in management sciences together with other courses, including management, macroeconomics, civil law and statistics (Klimkiewicz & Oltra, 2017). Unfortunately, the way the course is taught strictly depends on the teacher's experience and awareness. Meanwhile, it should be pointed out how crucial the role of academic teachers is in promoting social responsibility as a basic competence in university education (Martínez-Valdivia et al., 2020). In principle, it is difficult to determine that there is any integrated approach or standardization of teaching content in the area of CSR.

Research conducted in the last decade among students of the largest Polish universities showed that the

respondents recognized a place for ethics in business, but at the same time they admitted that competition and the desire for quick profits violate ethical principles in the operation of companies. According to Polish students, companies mainly strive to generate profits, while in most cases CSR is only a “catchy” element of company PR (Karbowski et al., 2006). Other studies indicate that students’ knowledge of CSR is superficial and slogan-based (Kozubek, 2016), and the activities of various universities and institutions in the field of CSR education are poorly coordinated (Albińska et al., 2011; Dziwiński et al., 2015).

Apart from students studying economics or related fields, young Polish consumers and future employees, as yet, still have a poor knowledge of CSR. If they recognize the term at all, they only associate it with the promotion of enterprises (Ciemniewski & Buszko, 2009; Wagner, 2014, p. 115). At the same time, young Poles follow the charity activities of companies on social media, engage in protests against unethical players on the market (Piechota, 2014), and pay attention to the CSR activities of the potential employer when looking for a job (Klimkiewicz & Oltra, 2017). Recent reports indicate that CSR issues are perceived as important and relevant to about 70% of Polish employees under 29 years of age (Wołowicz, 2018).

Meanwhile, in Spain many universities offer courses that include CSR content in their curriculum. Such classes are conducted either by practitioners and entities specializing in CSR, or by academic teachers (the latter situation is much more common). Although three quarters of Spanish universities include CSR content in corporate management or related courses, this varies depending on the course. An analysis of the curricula of 62 Spanish universities that offer courses such as “Business administration and management” shows that less than 18% of them offer subjects or courses that refer to the concept of social responsibility or business ethics in their titles (Setó-Pamies et al., 2011, p. 611). Such classes are frequently offered as elective, suggesting that the competencies of future managers to construct and manage CSR programs are still not considered a core business skill. These results correspond to previous analyses carried out in other European countries (Barkhuysen & Rossouw, 2000; Cowton & Cummins, 2003; Macfarlane & Ottewill, 2004; Setó-Pamies et al., 2011). As in Poland, CSR courses [in Spain] are offered mainly in most postgraduate programs and hardly exist at the undergraduate level (Fernández-Fernández & Sanjuán, 2010). The conducted analyses also indicate that the introduction of CSR courses into master’s degree programs is not treated as a priority by universities, but more often this is done by private higher education business schools (Miotto et al., 2018; Miotto & Rom-Rodríguez, 2017; Snelson-Powell et al., 2016). CSR education at university level can also be treated as a tool for shaping the ethical attitudes of future specialists and managers (Ruiz-Palomino et al., 2019). Society expectations in this respect are increasing. Stakeholders say that business schools should provide

sustainable and responsible management education, to ensure smooth knowledge transfer and to conduct research regarding CSR. The real value is to train future leaders qualified to manage organizations in a manner that has a positive social, economic and environmental impact for all stakeholders and to be able to shape a better world (Miotto et al., 2020).

The approach of society towards CSR has recently evolved fairly rapidly. The unexpected recent pandemic required organizations to take specific measures related to CSR, such as donating funds, supporting social campaigns (#stayathome, #besafe), producing protective masks, creating new products to support the fight against the pandemic, publishing posts on their Facebook profiles, and taking additional preventive measures (Czajkowska, 2020; Firley, 2021; Forum Odpowiedzialnego Biznesu, 2021). These activities – dedicated to the local community, can be included in the area of Corporate Community Involvement (CCI), which is probably one of the most visible aspects of CSR (Cronin et al., 2001).

The above literature review of CSR teaching does not reveal that Spanish CSR teaching is superior to the Polish approach. Both CSR teaching programs have their drawbacks, with the main lack of CSR courses in bachelor study programs being the core observation. However, the Spanish CSR program appears to be more advanced due to a longer historical background with a capitalist market and experience of a democratic system. If this is so, UV students should be at a higher level regarding many CSR aspects than UL students. In turn, as far as Polish students’ CSR preferences are concerned, the picture is even less clear. As indicated in the study, we proposed two hypotheses:

H1. Students of management and economics at the University of Valencia (UV) will obtain higher results than students of management at the University of Lodz (UL) in terms of their declared knowledge about CSR and its importance in the organization.

H2. Students of management and economics at the University of Valencia will obtain higher results than students of management at the University of Lodz in terms of their declared readiness to undertake CSR activities.

It is also imperative to compare the ‘CSR only’ and ‘CSR-related’ courses at the two faculties to see which curricula provide a better understanding of CSR ideas. In Valencia, all CSR-related courses are elective and offered in the later years of study. There are six basic BA degree programs, of which three offer partly CSR-oriented courses, namely “Quality and environmental management”, “Corporate governance and social responsibility”, “Corporate environmental policy”, “Environmental economics”, “Professional ethics and social corporate responsibility” and “Tourism and sustainable development”. There are also HRM-related courses and other basic socially-oriented management courses which may refer to CSR-related topics (<https://www.uv.es/uvweb/economy/en/undergraduate-degree-studies/degree-programmes-offered/degrees-1285848977179.html>).

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In turn, there are no typical CSR-oriented elective courses within any of the thirteen BA programs in Lodz either. However, some information regarding CSR is provided during other basic socially-oriented courses such as “Standards of HRM”, “Social aspects of management” “Environmental management” and “Ethics of new technology”. Interestingly, there are more CSR-related courses for students in programs provided in English, and on the Erasmus and Mobility programs (“Corporate Social Responsibility” or “Business Ethics”). (<http://zarzadzanie.uni.lodz.pl/tabid/2853/Default.aspx>).

There are four MA degree programs in Lodz, and the situation regarding CSR-related courses is similar to the BA degree programs. CSR issues occasionally appear in basic subjects within the curricula. CSR ideas are presented as a part of optional, specialty subjects, usually in the second year in subjects like “Ethics in public administration”, “Customer relationship management”, “Social responsibility in supply chain” or “Human Side of the Company”.

Meanwhile in Valencia, sixteen MA programs are offered, and, depending on the program, CSR issues are found in basic-level subjects (“Advanced management accounting and corporate social responsibility” in the Accounting, Auditing and Management Control MA Degree, or in “Ethics and corporate social responsibility” in the Corporate Finance MA Degree) or are selected later by students as optional.

## Methodology

The chi2 independence test was chosen to show significant statistical differences between items developed in the questionnaire (Appendix 1) between the two researched groups. It looked at how students view both their declared CSR knowledge regarding career decisions and company-related measurement, as well as their readiness to apply CSR in management and personal choices. The five-point Likert scale was used together with a dichotomy in the form of yes / no answers. The research was conducted between January 2018 and May 2018 among students of both selected faculties. The study did not capture any changes in opinions that could have been caused by the pandemic. In total, 607 students took part in the

study, of whom 70% were female (36% were from UL and 34% from UV), while 30% of the respondents were male (7% on the Polish side and 23% on the Spanish side). The respondents mainly represented the fields of economics, finance and management – including HR management, business management, etc.

The sample represents students belonging to *Generation Z*, born between 1995 and 2010. In general, there is one feature common to Spanish and Polish young people: they were all brought up in VUCA conditions (volatility, uncertainty, complexity, ambiguity) featuring short-term contracts and never-ending technological change, with constant mobile internet access (Mazurek, 2019). Polish and Spanish Zennials constantly share information and practice internet communication skills using social media. They are multitasking individuals, adaptable and open, expect immediate reward for their efforts, and are highly competitive in the labour market, constantly looking for new challenges (Mazurek, 2019; Rubio Gil & Sanagustín-Fons, 2019).

There are also national differences. Spanish Zennials attend universities which are above the European average in terms of educational performance. Surprisingly, it is still hard for them to find employment, but they look with more optimism to the future, unlike previous generations (Rubio Gil & Sanagustín-Fons, 2019). In turn, Polish Zennials do not exhibit much empathy or self-control, are poor team workers, are unwilling to exchange opinions or to discuss their ideas, display a low level of ambition in terms of their career, and exhibit a low level of engagement in work colleges. They also assess their economic knowledge and competencies as low (Mazurek, 2019). Some findings show that although Polish Zennials expect fair and equal treatment in the workplace, surprisingly, they do not perceive ethical values as an important part of their job (Dobrowolski et al., 2022).

There is a weakness in the sample regarding a considerable number of the UV first- (36%) and second-year (16%) BA students compared to only a few of the UL first- and second-year BA students (1% for each year). The UV students could be less familiar with CSR ideas. This remark was included in the analysis and findings. However, the data in Table 1 shows that in Valencia a bachelor’s degree usually lasts four

**Table 1**  
*Structure of respondents in terms of the type and year of study (N = 607)*

Level and academic year	UL students		UV students		Total respondents %
	N	%	N	%	
1st year, bachelor’s degree	3	1	124	36	21
2nd year, bachelor’s degree	2	1	54	16	9
3rd year, bachelor’s degree	68	26	64	19	22
4th year, bachelor’s degree	n/a	n/a	49	14	8
1st year, master’s degree	64	24	n/a	n/a	11
2nd year, master’s degree	129	48	n/a	n/a	21
1st year (in Valencia), master’s degree	n/a	n/a	50	15	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>266</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>341</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

*Note.* In Valencia, a bachelor’s degree usually lasts four years and a master’s degree lasts one or two years, depending on the field of study.

n/a – not applicable

*Source:* authors’ own work.

years and a master’s degree lasts one or two years, depending on the field of study. In Lodz, a bachelor’s degree lasts only three years, but a master’s degree lasts two years. Despite the differences between the programs, students study for the same number of years, which allows the authors to make comparisons between the groups.

**Results and hypothesis verification**

The statistical analysis which was conducted using the chi2 independence test shows that the statements made by UV and UL students differ from each other in a statistically significant way (at the adopted level of  $p < 0.05$ ). As far as declared CSR knowledge is concerned, the comparison of student responses from the two universities shows that more UV students have heard of the CSR concept than UL students ( $\text{chi2} = -4.07, p = 0.0001$ ). Both in the case of knowledge of the concept of CSR and its use in business, UV students more often answered in the affirmative (Table 2), and the same was true in the case of the belief that specific CSR achievements could be measured. In turn, Polish students were more enthusiastic about ethics and CSR in business.

Taking the whole sample into consideration, the knowledge of CSR declared by the respondents was not influenced by their gender. However, apart from nationality, the fact that some students in the two groups were employed (Fig. 1) was important for their knowledge of CSR ( $\text{chi2} = 4.35, p = 0.04$ ).

The affirmative statements regarding CSR measurability shows that for all students there are no significant statistical differences in the respondents’ answers due to their gender, employment or level of studies. The results also highlight that there is room for CSR and ethics in business, but women were less inclined than men to respond “no” ( $\text{chi2} = -2.72, p = 0.01$ ). The results of students in employment from both universities show that there is no significant difference between them in this regard. However, what really matters is the level of study, because bachelor’s degree students more often chose the option “I don’t know” ( $\text{chi2} = 3.14, p = 0.003$ ), while masters students more often expressed the belief that there is room for ethics and CSR in business ( $\text{chi2} = -2.37, p = 0.024$ ).

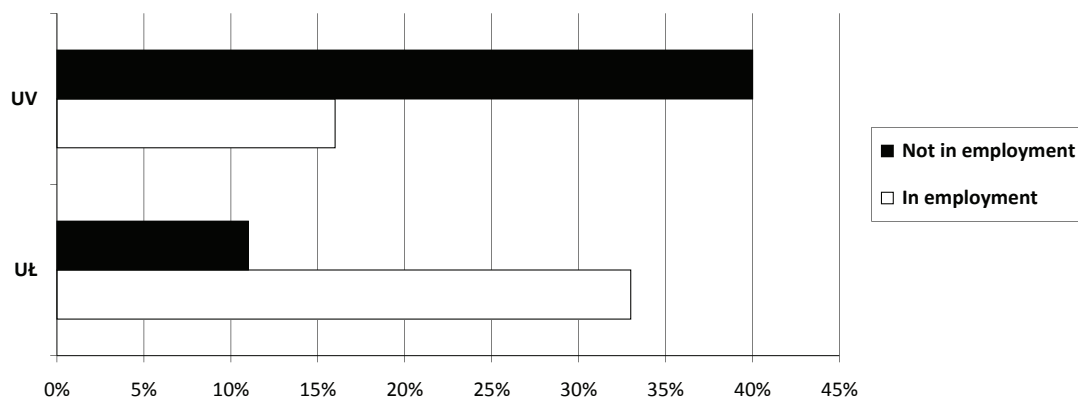
The results regarding whether the respondents believe that their knowledge of CSR is sufficient to make career-related decisions are interesting (Fig. 2). UL students gave statistically significant answers “strongly agree” ( $\text{chi2} = 8.28, p = 0.00$ ), while UV students more often gave more cautious answers: “disagree” ( $\text{chi2} = -4.51, p = 0.00002$ ), “neither agree or disagree” ( $\text{chi2} = -3.56, p = 0.0007$ ) and “agree” ( $\text{chi2} = -3.81, p = 0.0003$ ). It turns out that the presented results are influenced by the level of study – bachelor’s degree students selected “strongly agree” more often than the higher level students ( $\text{chi2} = 3.30, p = 0.002$ ) who, in turn, showed less self-confidence in this matter, choosing more often the option “neither agree or disagree” ( $\text{chi2} = 4.37, p = 0.00003$ ) or “agree” ( $\text{chi2} = 2.08, p = 0.04$ ).

**Table 2**  
Selected issues concerning the declared knowledge of various aspects of CSR

Issue	UL		UV		chi2	p
	N	%	N	%		
My knowledge of the concept of CSR is sufficient to make good career decisions	218	82	318	93	-4.07	0.00010
The company’s CSR achievements can be measured	140	53	211	62	-2.19	0.03597
There is a place for ethics and CSR in business	253	99	309	90	2.388336	0.02303

Source: authors’ own work.

**Figure 1**  
Employment status of students from both Universities

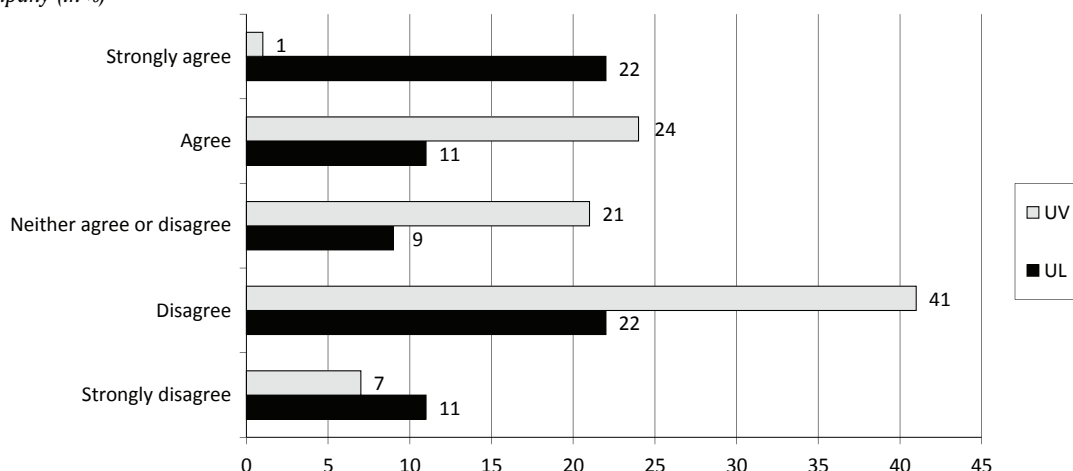


Source: authors’ own work.

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**Figure 2**

The respondents' opinions on whether their knowledge of CSR is sufficient to make decisions about choosing to work for a new company (in %)



Source: authors' own work.

The first hypothesis (H1) states: Students of management and economics at the University of Valencia (UV) will obtain higher results than students of management at the University of Lodz (UL) in terms of their declared knowledge about CSR and its importance in the organization. Bearing the above results in mind, H1 can only be conditionally confirmed. As shown, the UV students more often declared that they were familiar with the concept of CSR, were convinced that its effects could be measured, and demonstrated that they knew in which organizations CSR could be used. However it was UL students who more often expressed the belief that there is a place for CSR and ethics in business. Nevertheless, the sample structure includes more UV bachelor students than UL students, and the former will definitely improve CSR knowledge over time.

As to declared readiness to undertake CSR activities, the results showed that there are statistically significant differences regarding affirmative answers in favor of UV students (Table 3).

We also found that the willingness to take independent measures promoting CSR in the company was influenced by the gender of the respondents: women from both universities more often selected "yes"

( $\chi^2 = -3.75, p = 0.0004$ ) or "no" ( $\chi^2 = -2.48, p = 0.02$ ), while men were more hesitant in their opinions, selecting "I don't know" more often ( $\chi^2 = 5.48, p = 0.000$ ). The level of study also played a role: bachelor's degree students declared such willingness more often ( $\chi^2 = 4.49, p = 0.00002$ ), while master's students more often expressed uncertainty in this regard ( $\chi^2 = -5.13, p = 0.0000$ ). The approach to declared readiness to promote CSR activities in the company also depended on whether the respondents were employed. Students in employment from both universities declared such readiness less often ( $\chi^2 = -5.65, p = 0.0000$ ), whereas students not in employment more often expressed indecision ( $\chi^2 = 4.56, p = 0.000$ ).

When it comes to the respondents' readiness to encourage the company's management to introduce CSR activities, in addition to nationality (Table 3), the gender of the respondents had an impact – women less often declared such readiness ( $\chi^2 = -3.092, p = 0.003$ ), whilst men were more often undecided ( $\chi^2 = 2.79, p = 0.008$ ). The issue of employment was also important – students in employment from both universities less often wanted to encourage management to introduce CSR activities ( $\chi^2 = -4.88,$

**Table 3**

Declared readiness to promote and implement independent CSR activities

Issue	UL		UV		chi2	p
	N	%	N	%		
I'd be ready to take independent measures promoting the concept of CSR in business	21	8%	205	60%	-13.15	0.000
I'd be ready to encourage company owners / management in my workplace to introduce CSR tools into the organization	124	47%	287	84%	-9.70	0.000
I'd be ready to get involved in the promotion and implementation of CSR in my workplace	164	62%	288	84%	-6.25	0.000

Source: authors' own work.

$p = 0.000$ ), as opposed to students not in employment, who chose the negative answer less often ( $\chi^2 = 3.16; p = 0.0028$ ). The level of study had a similar effect on the respondents' answers – the more experienced master's students expressed indecision more often ( $\chi^2 = -4.26, p = 0.0005$ ), in relation to bachelor's degree students, who more often declared such readiness ( $\chi^2 = 4.29, p = 0.004$ ).

Therefore, the findings show that the greater the respondents' experience (whether at work or at university) the greater the skepticism about the discussed issue. As for the declared readiness to engage in the promotion and implementation of CSR in the company, in addition to nationality (Table 3), the gender of the respondents had an impact – we found that men's responses were negative more often ( $\chi^2 = -2.57, p = 0.015$ ). As in the case of employment, working students were less likely to engage in promoting and implementing CSR in their companies ( $\chi^2 = -3.19, p = 0.002$ ), as opposed to the non-working students, who were more often undecided ( $\chi^2 = 2.27, p = 0.003$ ), or felt ready to take such actions ( $\chi^2 = 2.21, p = 0.003$ ). The level of study was not statistically significant here.

The greater readiness on the part of UV students to undertake CSR activities was also confirmed by the responses to the question about whether they would take up employment in a company conducting CSR activities if it offered slightly lower remuneration than the competition (Fig. 3). In a statistically significant manner, UV students more often selected "strongly agree" for employment ( $\chi^2 = 2.99, p = 0.005$ ), while Polish students more often chose the answer "disagree" ( $\chi^2 = 2.92, p = 0.006$ ).

Interestingly, statistically significant differences were not noted in the answers to the above question between the group of working students and the group of non-working students. This indicates that this declared readiness does not depend on

the respondents' current employment experience. Other findings indicated that a certain link between readiness to take up employment in a company that conducts CSR activities but offers lower salaries and gender – women were less likely to reject such an option than men ( $\chi^2 = -2.49, p = 0.02$ ); the level of study did not play any role in this regard.

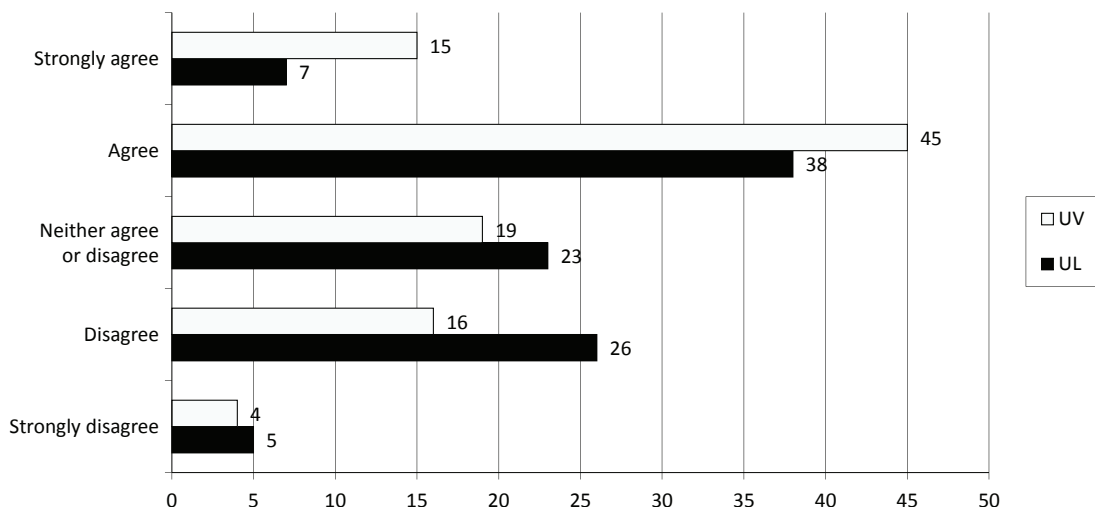
The second hypothesis (H2) states: Students of management and economics at the University of Valencia will obtain higher results than students of management at the University of Lodz in terms of their declared readiness to undertake CSR activities. The results confirm H2. It was found that UV students declared their readiness to take CSR measures, such as encouraging the company's management to take an interest, or to personally promote CSR activities in the company, more often than UL students. UV students also declared their willingness to work in a company guided by CSR values and activities, even if remuneration was lower.

### Discussion

It was initially supposed that there would be a huge gap between UV and UL students within the research areas, and indeed this proved to be the case. In the light of the findings, the features of the sample must be borne in mind, as there were far more BA respondents from Valencia than from Lodz. However, this research shows that UV students are more engaged in almost every studied CSR issue than UL students, and this defect in the sample mentioned in the methodology did not affect the UV students' results. Spanish students may simply observe many more CSR examples in their everyday life. For instance, there is a significant difference in the number of CSR reported practices between Poland and Spain, where in Spain more CSR activities were disclosed Spanish by stock listed companies

**Figure 3**

*Declared readiness to take up employment in a company that conducts CSR activities, but offers lower remuneration (in %)*



Source: authors' own work.



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(Garstecki et al., 2019). UV students also have more elective CSR-related courses within BA and MA programs than UL students.

The results support their CSR involvement and determination but say little about their real knowledge. Only “a place for ethics and CSR in business” was favored more by UL students and may reflect the need to implement CSR more in Poland than in Spain. There are also some contextual factors which may also explain this. Polish students’ positive reaction could derive from a far lower unemployment rate compared to Spain (4.1% to 16.4% in January 2018), but simultaneously they are considered a low-cost, well-educated resource with a minimum wage of almost half that in Spain (502 to 858 Euro in 2018, see: <https://countryeconomy.com>). CSR can also be seen as a remedy to balance the market and to regulate economic disparities. It needs to be borne in mind that CSR can be a consequence of the individual social preferences of entrepreneurs and shareholders, or the whim of well-meaning managers as the ultimate driving force behind any form of CSR (Kitzmueller, 2008). In fact, the influence of stakeholders on CSR is not fully understood and has not been explained. The same may apply to students’ opinions on CSR knowledge and readiness to take action. However, in general, women from both faculties are more inclined than men to present an affirmative attitude towards CSR activities.

### **Implications for theory and for educational practice**

Although Polish students were less familiar with the CSR concept, they considered themselves sufficiently equipped to make professional decisions. At first glance, this result could be interpreted as a manifestation of the psychological mechanism known as the Dunning-Kruger effect, in which unqualified people with insufficient knowledge in a given field tend to overestimate their skills in that field and therefore also make decisions based on limited knowledge (Dunning, 2011). However, there is too little data available, and this result can only be seen as a premise for further research.

It can be concluded that the concept of CSR is more widely known to UV students, but for both UL and UV students the number of people who consider their CSR knowledge as definitely sufficient to make career decisions is limited. This may be due both countries’ CSR teaching problems. Although education in CSR does not guarantee actual, ethical behavior of students in their future professional life, institutions responsible for educating future managers should at least increase awareness of social responsibility and ethics in business (Alonso-Almeida et al., 2015; Godemann et al., 2014; Ruiz-Palomino et al., 2019). At the same time, CSR teaching from outside of the company can still be of great advantage for society (Książak, 2016). Additionally, students in employment from both faculties are more familiar with the CSR concept, but simultaneously less ready to both promote CSR activities in the company and encourage

management to introduce CSR activities. This needs to be examined in depth.

The findings make it possible to formulate firm recommendations on how to improve students’ awareness of CSR ideas: (1) each BA program at both faculties should include at least a CSR-related course either as elective or even as a basic course, with significant ECTS points. This could direct a student’s attention to be more familiar with common interests of stakeholders in the EU market place; (2) the current situation is a specific opportunity to formulate new theses in the field of education and to implement the idea of CSR in practice. Business schools and universities specializing in business should become even more involved in CSR education; (3) CSR teaching could improve future managers’ professional development and practices, and ultimately support economic growth in Poland as a result; (4) CSR-related contextual factors regarding students’ CSR apprehension should be taken into consideration when teaching the course. The strengths of Zennials must be used to promote CSR ideas. Workshops and internship programs including practical activities could be a remedy to improve student engagement.

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### **Conclusion**

When answering the research questions posed in this study, it should be noted that: (1) the CSR knowledge in the UV students’ self-assessment is higher than that of UL students, but highly limited for both groups. This might be due to CSR teaching, which is still far from perfect (2).

UL and UV students report that a company’s CSR achievements may be measured. They seem to derive their knowledge from convictions regarding their basic knowledge of management. Last but not least (3) UV students are more willing to undertake CSR measures more often than UL students, and are even inclined to earn less to work for entrepreneurs that subscribe to CSR values. It needs to be borne in mind that young people are especially sensitive to the issue of CSR and are convinced that companies should strive to make the world a better place (Connell et al., 2012; Howe & Strauss, 2000). Consistent with these ideas, when we take a closer look at the findings, it appears that the more experience students have, the less engaged they are in CSR.

The highlighted gap between UV and UL students should be a basis for deep reflection among those who are responsible for teaching programs. Due to the growing impact of the CSR concept on management in terms of economic, social and environmental responsibility (Montiel, 2008), it is important to educate employees with particular emphasis on managerial staff (Miotto et al., 2020; Ojala, 2019).

### **Acknowledgments**

We are most grateful to the Centre for Scientific Research Quality (*Knowbase*) at the Faculty of Management, University of Lodz for a grant to complete our research.

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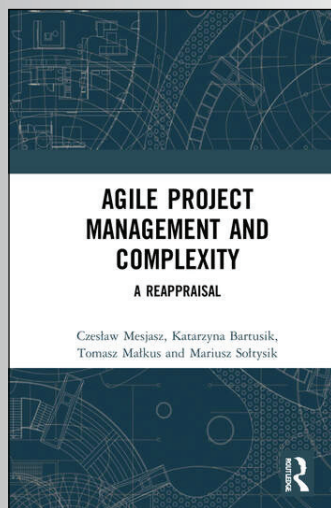
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**Marzena Syper-Jędrzejak** holds a PhD in economics and is an Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Management at the University of Lodz, Poland. She deals with the issues of people management in organizations. Her research interests are related to career development, work-life balance, corporate wellness, and stress prevention in contemporary organizations.

**Wojciech Ulrych** holds a PhD in economics and is an Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Management at University of Lodz, Poland. His professional interests are concentrated on a systemic approach to organization management. In his scientific work, he deals with the issues of lean management, employee performance management, remuneration, and humanization of work.

**Victor Oltra** holds a PhD in economics and is an Associate Professor of Management at the Faculty of Economics, the University of Valencia, Spain. His research interests focus on human resource management, innovation and knowledge management, business ethics and corporate social responsibility, and the links between these issues.

## WE RECOMMEND



**Czesław Mesjasz, Katarzyna Bartusik, Tomasz Małkus, & Mariusz Sołtysik,**  
*Agile Project Management and Complexity. A Reappraisal*

This research monograph presents an inter-disciplinary study of the impact, and current status, of applications of complexity-related concepts in the early stages of development of Agile Project Management (APM). The results serve as an introduction for exploring more profound relations between complexity-related ideas and APM in the future.

The increasing complexity of software projects and their environment in the 1990s constituted the main determinants of the development of the family of methodological frameworks called Agile Project Management. Development of APM has been shaped by a broadly defined area of research called complexity science or complexity theory based on complex adaptive systems (CAS) and on their characteristics: Complexity, chaos, the edge of chaos, emerging properties, non-linearity, self-organization, etc. In the 21st century, due to the expansion of Agile beyond software development, the challenges deriving from the complexity of projects and the environment are even more urgent or compelling. Such phenomena demand more profound inter- and multi-disciplinary studies. This

book examines the impact of applications of complexity-related ideas deriving from intuitive complexity and from complexity science in the early stages of development of the Agile methodological frameworks in project management and considers the current status of those applications. It questions the usefulness of those applications for the practice and theory of APM, and then proposes a conceptual framework for further theoretical studies and several ways of improvement and refinement of the Agile Project Management necessary to deal with broadly defined complexity in project management.

Publisher: Routledge, 2022

Source of the description of the book: the website of Routledge