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Leadership and Gender Differences—Are Men and Women Leading in the Same Way?

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Additional information is available at the end of the chapter

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Abstract

In this chapter, we aim to highlight the main gender differences in terms of leadership, to provide a critical comparative analysis, to discuss potential barriers that need to be overcome, and to find some ways of increasing organizational performance through a better leadership style. The focus will not be placed on the gender differences by themselves but on the ways these differences can positively influence the organizational performance. Our proposed chapter is mainly based on literature review as a methodology in its own right. Since literature review has revealed quite many divergent opinions, we also used questionnaires and interviews as data collection tools and we intend to present some of our results, without aiming to generalize all these results to different cultures. We cannot conclude that men's leadership skills are more powerful and more important than women's skills or vice versa, but it is clear that gender differences do exist and people should capitalize on them. We consider the word 'complementary' is better than the word 'different' when talking about leadership styles and that it is possible for leaders to develop a series of skills that are not necessarily traditionally linked to their own gender.

Keywords: leadership styles, gender, communication, motivation, femininity versus masculinity

1. Introduction

Business ventures are currently facing all sorts of risks that seem to be endangering their very existence. There are economic, political, cultural, environmental, technological, and social challenges that force stakeholders, investors, employees, and state representatives to carefully analyse and project different strategic scenarios in order to sustain long-term business growth.

When looking at the specialized literature concerning the business environment, the analyses are being conducted from different perspectives. Having said that, they do converge toward a universally shared opinion, which is that leadership decisively influences the day-to-day business activities and their results.

Therefore, it is obvious that there should be a vested interest in finding the correct answers to questions that focus on a leader's activities, their competencies, style behaviour, and personality, as many of the already conducted research offer valuable results, whether they are congruent or complementary. Some of these studies show that without a willingness to lead, without a commitment toward the company's mission and vision, and without integrity, the notion of authentic leadership simply does not exist in a business environment [1, 2]. That is why, when choosing or preparing future leaders, there is a need to:

- **Evaluate the people's desire to lead and favour a self-reflection process** that will offer them answers to questions such as: what do you feel when others are interested in finding out your opinions? During a project, do you like asking your teammates challenging questions? Do you enjoy helping the members of your team finish their tasks on time and in good conditions? How do you value personal interests versus the team's ones? Can you enable an authentic team spirit when working with other people? Do you feel comfortable when other people take your ideas and put them into practice? Do you enjoy helping others to improve their skills and assuming a coaching/mentoring role? When personal conflicts arise, would you rather sort them out within the team, or do you let them continue? What are your feelings when noticing someone else being successful? Can you have a productive discussion when the others are disagreeing with your opinion? Do you see your team's problems as your own? Do you enjoy generating ideas and sharing them with your group?
- **Evaluate the leader's commitment to the company's mission and vision.** It is hard to imagine how you can convince others to give their best when attempting something that you, as the leader, don't put a real faith in. Certainly, with careful observation, we can notice the fact that, not by accident, the first company leaders were actually the ones who created the company. The founding leaders had a mission and a vision regarding the purpose of their organization, their customers, and the changes that they will create in their belonging industry. They took risks and made personal sacrifices before their company has become a successful one. They hired the first leaders from within the company, trained and groomed them, taught them what to do and how to behave. These leaders, in turn, carried on the same process until the human hierarchies were created in order for the company to fulfil its mission and vision.
- **Evaluate integrity.** That means that a leader's actions should be in line with his/her words, he/she should behave according to his/her team's expectations, to be authentic and express the expectations he/she has from his/her colleagues and teammates. Although that does not sound very difficult, reality shows that these sorts of promises are not all that easy to keep. In fact, it is quite challenging for people to keep their word and be an example, especially when under a great amount of stress.

Over the past few years, there have been quite a lot of careful, diverse studies regarding the leadership concept. Often, it is analysed alongside the gender characteristics, which further reveal some interesting tendencies in the future of the business world.

As far as we are concerned, in this present chapter, we wanted to delve into the potential relationship between gender and leadership style, while also looking for an answer to the following question: 'Are Men and Women Leading in the Same Way?' We wanted to highlight the main gender differences, to provide a critical comparative analysis, to discuss potential barriers that need to be overcome, and to find some ways of increasing organizational performance through a better leadership style.

Leadership is contextual, as people's individual and organizational characteristics lead to particular perceptions and behaviours. Therefore, we should not expect to find the best way of dealing with people. However, we are interested in finding a series of elements that might lead to a leader profile that is able to influence the business environment in a positive manner. Therefore, the focus in this chapter will not be placed on the gender differences by themselves but on the ways these differences can positively influence the organizational performance. Actually, one of the main ideas that should be stressed right from the beginning is that we agree with the viewpoint of existing two different leadership styles—masculine and feminine—, but it is also important to add that the differences are not a result of the gender by itself and in fact refer to human traits that are only traditionally attributed to men and/or women.

Our opinions take into account not only many of the viewpoints expressed in the specialized literature but also the results of our own research, which was conducted over the past 2 years, through a survey and interviews with responsible factors in the Romanian business environment.

2. The evolution of women's managerial careers

Before speaking about women's leadership, we thought it would be useful to analyse women's relationship with their own career paths, as it was presented in several recent studies conducted all over the world.

In the past few years, women have increasingly expressed their desire to develop their careers, while the percentage of working women has also increased. At the same time, there have been favourable changes with regard to their presence in domains in which, till not long ago, women were accessing with difficulty.

A recent survey conducted by the ILO's Bureau for Employers' Activities (ACT/EMP) (2013) among around 1300 private sector companies in 39 developing countries showed the extent to which the companies have policies and measures in place to promote women in management [3]. And these policies were not created only as a result of a need for minimizing the problems created due to gender discrimination. They are, instead, based on an increasing and extremely important awareness that women have great results in the organizations they lead. That explains the conclusion of a study made by Catalyst (conducted in 2008), according to which the percentage of women in managerial positions has seen a constant increase from 13.8% in 1950 to 26.1% in 1980 and to more than 50% nowadays [4, 5].

Still, it should be noted that, in reality, when women are part of management, they usually find themselves in the middle of the pyramid and rarely at the top [6]. They are underrepresented in

the well-paid job sector and it will take some time until this imbalance changes. Furthermore, there is still a considerable gap between men and women earnings [7]. In addition, even if some authors advanced the idea that women and men are equal from the point of view of education in many occupational fields [8], US Bureau of Labor Statistics still shows that women obtain only 80% of men’s incomes [9]. This inequality affects women at various professional levels. At a high level, women are less preferred for the managerial and professional positions and for the positions involving decision-making regarding the policy of the company [8, 10].

On a global level, women’s involvement in the management structures is shown in **Table 1**. The results indicate that in just four countries (Finland, Sweden, Norway and United Kingdom) women represent over 20% of board members; in 13 countries, between 10% and 20%; in 14 countries, between 5% and 10%, and in 13 countries, <5%.

We can also look at the percentage of men and women in management positions in different sectors, as shown in **Table 2**.

It is quite easy to observe that women are a large percentage of management in the HR, Public Relations and Communications; there is quite a balanced approach in the Finance and Administration departments, whereas women represent a minority in the Research and Development of new products and especially in Sales and Operations. The f also shows a strong imbalance for women when looking at the General Manager position.

>20%	10–20%	5–10%	<5%
Finland	Australia	Belgium	Bahrain
Norway	Austria	Brazil	Chile
Sweden	Canada	China	India
United Kingdom	Denmark	Greece	Japan
	France	MK China	Kuwait
	Germany	Indonesia	Oman
	Israel	Ireland	Portugal
	Netherlands	Italy	Qatar
	Poland	Malaysia	Rep. of Korea
	South Africa	Mexico	Russia
	Turkey	New Zealand	Saudi Arabia
	Switzerland	Singapore	Taiwan
	USA	Spain	UAE
		Thailand	

Table 1. Percentage of board seats held by women, 2013, Catalyst Inc. Knowledge Center [11].

This sort of gender difference can be traced back to the education system. If we look at the young people’s options in terms of University degrees and their trends, we can predict future

trends. In **Figure 1**, we can look at some key information regarding graduate distribution in countries all over the world.

	0–10%	11–20%	21–30%	31–40%
HR				
Women				X
Men			X	
PR & communications				
Women			X	
Men		X		
Finance and administration				
Women			X	
Men			X	
Research and product development				
Women		X		
Men			X	
Sales and operations				
Women		X		
Men				X
General managers				
Women		X		
Men			X	

Table 2. Percentage of companies with women and men in different types of management, International Labour Organization [3].

As it can be seen from **Figure 1**, the positive evolution that has been recorded over the past few years in terms of an increased involvement of women in business and management did not create a perfect overall balance. So, it is obvious that we should expect a continuous future acceleration of this phenomenon.

We have presented this situation not only in order to characterize a certain facet of the current business environment but also to show that women’s presence, scarce as it is, has allowed specialists to observe the way in which they behave in leadership roles, as well as their competencies and potential in that sort of position. We did not expect to see big percentages of women as leaders. We also consider that gender stereotypes are still part of global culture and are a big reason for this current situation because this results also from practice and other studies [12].

The feeling that we are unable to actively help solving this gender imbalance in leadership positions is certainly not a very comfortable one, which is why we thought it would be useful to redistribute some opinions that validate the results of women as leaders. In our opinion,

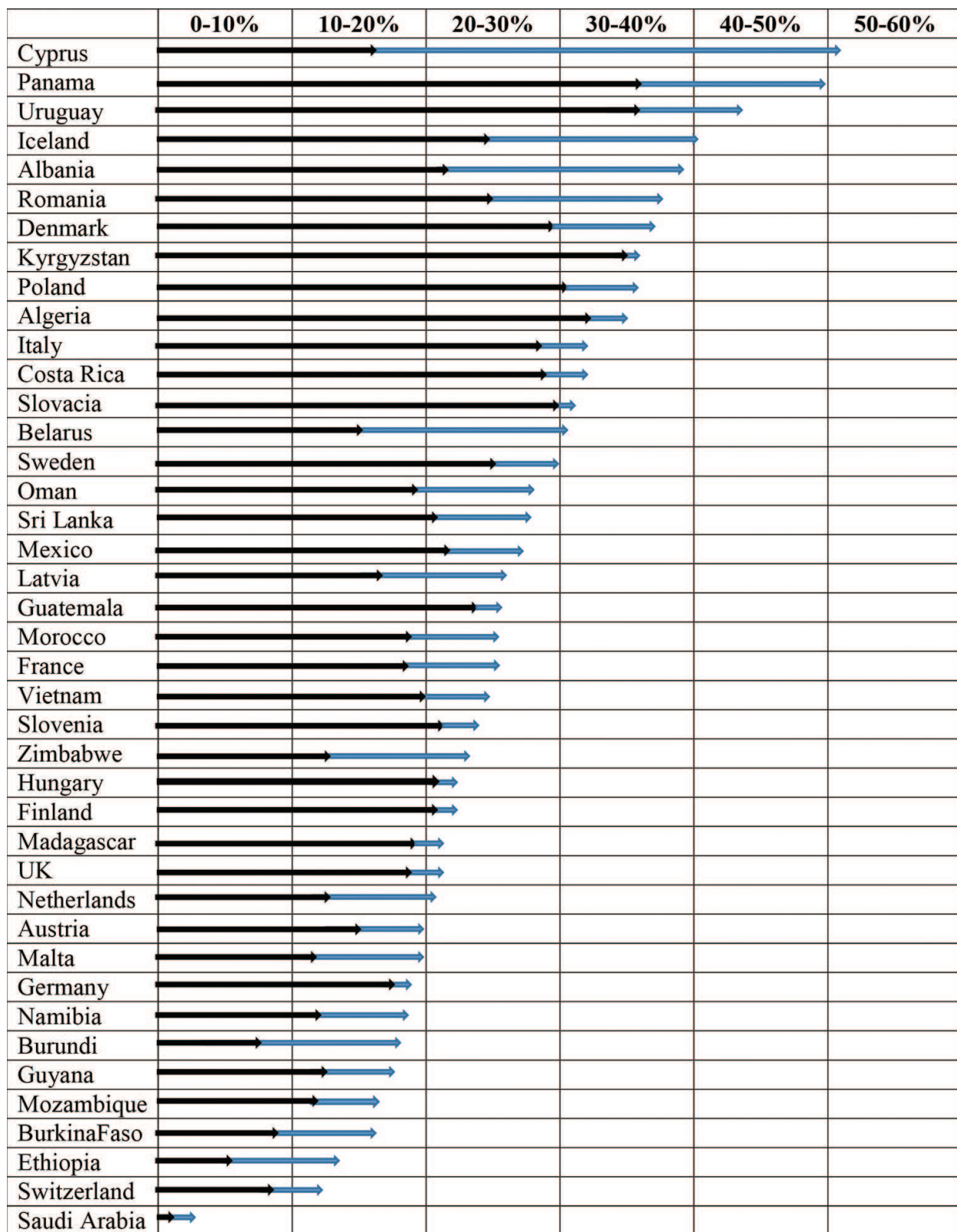


Figure 1. Increase in percentage of graduates in engineering, manufacturing, and constructions who are women, selected countries, 2000–2012, International Labour Organization [3].

it is quite revealing that, according to many analyses, employees view female leaders better than male ones in several characteristics regarding transformational leadership (charisma, motivational skills, creativity, problem solving, and several other key skills that show leadership efficiency) [13–15]. Furthermore, Eagly has evidenced that, according to research, teams with a female leader are more willing to make an extra effort, are more satisfied with their leader and their teams are in many cases more efficient when compared with teams with a male manager. All the information currently at our disposal regarding women's ability to act as efficient leaders still does not answer this question: how is there still so much data showing a serious discrepancy between genders in terms of leadership, when women leaders are currently viewed much better by the management than they were previously, perhaps even better than their male counterparts? This paradox seems to be a reflection of our current historical context and proves that, despite the fact that the social roles of women are rapidly changing, there is still a traditional cultural expectation which continues to be the norm [14].

3. Challenges in the evolution of women's careers

Keeping all these information in mind, all we need to do is take a look at the barriers, which are slowing down the evolution of women's careers. Some of these challenges refer to the women role in families and in society as a whole. Moreover, there are just a few role models for women, and masculine corporate cultures are still the norm in many cases. Women are the ones who take most of the family responsibilities and it is hard to find some flexible work solutions. While gender equality policies are generally in place, they are not properly implemented and there is an inherent bias in recruitment, selection, and promotion. Stereotypes against women and discrimination can lead to real problems (which have totally different dimensions depending on the culture) [3]. No matter the diversity of potential barriers for women as leaders, they could be grouped into two main categories: work-family challenges and discrimination.

There are also other barriers keeping women from accessing the top management level, which basically reflect some general psychological differences between the two genders [16, 17]. As women are more emotionally driven than men, they tend not to act in an authoritarian manner, and in many cases, it is hard for them to use imperatives and to show disapproval, when it is the case. They are less aggressive than men and tend to involve personally, to smile more, but also to give credit to other people for their own success. As a plus, they are generally available when people need them, as they prefer to invest their time in building relationships.

'Glass cliff' is also a concept that has been used quite often in the recent literature. It refers to the idea of choosing women for leadership positions associated rather with deteriorating than with increasing their performance, whereas the opposite is found in the case of men (who are rather chosen for leadership positions associated with increasing and not with decreasing performance) [18, 19]. According to the authors who identified this phenomenon, the glass cliff should appear especially in the case of a masculine industry and/or culture and this could happen due to gender stereotypes. However, a recent study does not support this

theory, after a research on a highly masculine IT setting in Turkey [20]. There are also many other studies that support or reject the hypothesis of the glass cliffs and for sure this could be further explored [16, 21]. In our opinion, results will always be contextual, as it depends on a lot of variables: feminine/masculine culture, field of activity, team structure (gender, age, occupation, and previous experience), and so on.

4. Feminine leadership versus masculine leadership

If we compare male and female leaders, we can see that it is an ever-evolving situation. There are some female principles and characteristics (such as using their intuition in the decision-making process, being careful, getting a good work-life balance, and social responsibility), as being in tune with the basic cultural hypotheses with regard to the way men and women think and act [22].

In general, women are better equipped for motivation (they are energetic and enthusiastic), communication (they make sure that their employees are well informed), feedback (they update their team in terms of their performance), and aspirations (they set high goals). Men are better at tradition (building knowledge based on past experience), innovation (they are open to new ideas and are willing to take chances), strategy (seeing the big picture), being calm (they tend to keep their emotions in check), delegating (they assign objectives and responsibilities), cooperation (they are good teammates), and persuasion (they sell ideas and win people over).

Furthermore, women tend to be better evaluated in terms of empathy (showing good people management skills and their needs by establishing a strong connection with their team) and communication (by establishing clear demands from others, expressing their thoughts and ideas clearly, and by keeping a solid communication flow) when compared to men [23]. Also, women are better qualified in terms of people skills (sensitivity toward others, being kind, having good listening skills, and developing efficient relationships with their team and their superiors). Contrary to popular belief, women have great results on the leadership scale, which measures their focus on production (women have a great interest in achieving their goals; they have high expectations both from themselves and their colleagues). Men tend to get good results on scales that evaluate the focus on strategic planning and the overall company vision.

We all know that at the beginning of this century, the professional activity was totally different from the reality nowadays. There was no discussion upon flexibility and innovation as phenomena characterizing the global economic conditions and there were no such fast changes in technology. Cameron calls these transformation changes in the culture of Anglo-American capitalism and associates them with the passage to the norms of traditional interaction (aggressiveness, competitiveness, and individualism) to a new leadership style focused on flexibility, team work, and collaboration in problem solving [24].

Traditionally, the most appreciated leadership characteristics were masculine in their nature. Yet, in the past years, the researchers have shown that many of these traits (assertiveness,

individualism, and task orientation) did not always contribute to the efficacy of leadership. Instead of the leadership theory centred on The Great Man, the transformational leadership has emerged, and its efficiency is supported by more and more researchers [14]. It is interesting that many of the traits of the transformational leadership (such as collaboration and empowerment) are associated traditionally with women, which illustrates that many feminine features contribute to the leadership efficacy. Fortune 500 showed how the companies with many female managers have a much higher average productivity of their own capital in comparison with the companies with few female managers [25]. Despite this information, female leaders still deal with many disadvantages. Often, people tend to attribute their success as leaders to some external rather than internal factors and avoid placing them on leadership positions [16].

Some authors showed that increasing the number of female leaders has been accompanied by changes of theory and practice in leadership [15]. They also specify that the most modern characterization of an efficient leadership found in the literature and in mass media is heavily based on the characteristics considered to be feminine. At the same time, they state that if the leadership roles belong to more women and/or are perceived feminine attributes, we will continue to see a serious cultural change. It is a real success that many analyses emphasize the fact that employees position female leaders better than male leaders in more traits of the transformational leadership (charisma, ability to motivate the employees, and creativity in problem solving) [13–15]. Moreover, these characteristics of leadership are considered a real support for the efficacy of leadership. Subordinates of some of the female leaders are more willing to make supplementary effort, are more satisfied with their leaders, and are more efficient competitively in comparison with the subordinates of male leaders. It was also observed that women work harder than men in the same position, and this difference is explainable by the strict standards and exigencies manifested toward women [26].

Various papers published on this topic develop and compare the feminine leadership with the masculine leadership. The feminine leadership style was called social-expressive, with personal attention paid to subordinates and with focus on a good work environment; by contrast, the masculine leadership style was described as an instrumental one, focused on giving directions. Helgesen is one who made researches that led to the identification of the differences between the masculine and feminine leadership styles [27]. The works of Hofstede are also very well known at the international level and actually femininity versus masculinity is considered an important cultural dimension. Human traits that are generally attributed to men are more present in some cultures, whereas the ones generally attributed to women appear in other cultures. For example, in a more masculine culture, like the American one, it is expected that in CVs, people's works are presented in superlative terms, as they feel the need to show their qualities and sometimes even more. For people living in a masculine culture, it is important to win, to have recognition, to be promoted, and to accept challenges. On the contrary, in Holland, we should meet more modesty, as there is a feminine culture. People value relationships and cooperation and generally think that work safety is more important than challenges [28].

Is feminine leadership a solution for modern organizations? In order to answer this question, we took, as our starting point, the opinions of Kouzes and Posner and conducted a research based on the list of the 10 descriptors included in the Checklist of Admired Leaders: Ambitions, Caring, Competent, Determined, Forward-looking, Honest, Imaginative, Inspiring, Loyal, and

Self-controlled [29]. In conducting this research, we have taken the following steps: Step 1: Preparing the research. During this stage, we formulated the goal of the research, we chose the research method, and we built the instrument we needed to conduct it. Also, we defined the respondent group, while also formulating the research hypotheses. Step 2: Conducting the research. During this stage, the research was launched and the respondents' opinions were gathered. Step 3: Interpreting the results, verifying that the objectives were completed, and validating the work hypotheses that were initially formulated.

We have taken into consideration the continued development of new businesses, organizational structures, and operational and managerial processes. Many of today's companies are lean, dynamic, and adaptable, which is essential, especially with employees who have different expectations, motivations, and skills than the ones from previous generations. It seems obvious that a successful leader for these types of companies ought to have a different profile from the traditional one.

In order to collect the data, we have constructed a questionnaire consisting of two parts: Part 1, composed of questions referring to personal information: age, gender, field of work, professional status (manager/non-manager) and Part 2, in which respondents are invited to establish the relationship between, on the one hand, the leadership characteristics as seen by Kouzes and Posner and, on the other hand, the gender of a successful leader (in other words, they were asked to assign each characteristic to a gender: masculine, feminine, or they could consider to be neutral). Then, the respondents were asked to order these characteristics on a scale of 1–10, based on their importance to a successful leader.

After analysing the resulted data, we have noticed that descriptors such as Ambitious, Caring, Honest, Imaginative, and Loyal are mainly associated with a female style of leadership, whereas descriptors like Competent and Forward looking tend to be associated with a male style of leadership. We have also noticed the fact that there is no clear answer when looking at the Determined, Inspiring, and Self-controlled descriptors, which means that these concepts are generally equally attributed to male and female leadership.

This research has also helped us observe how people's perception of a successful leader varies when the respondent is a manager or not, male or female, and when they belong to a certain generation (Baby boomers, X or Y). Indeed, the respondents' opinion influenced their preference for several key female leadership characteristics: non-manager respondents said that they appreciated descriptors such as Honest, Imaginative, and Caring more (35% versus 15%). As far as the generation differences are concerned, they were also clearly visible: for people from Generation Y, characteristics such as Imaginative, Ambitious, Honest, Inspiring, and Determined are more valued, which suggests the fact that, over time, there have been changes in mentality that favour the women's style of leadership.

The research has also given us a lot of signals indicating that successful leadership is no longer solely attributed to men and we anticipate that there will be further important changes in the approach based on the social and cultural evolution of our times. For this reason, we will keep following the articles and studies written on this subject and we will analyse the opinions of as many employees from the business environment as possible.

5. In search of 'The Best' leadership

In the last year, our research has continued with studying the general gender differences presented by Human Synergistic International in Life Styles Inventory (LSI) [30]. First of all, we took into account all the 12 styles, grouped into the three clusters:

- Constructive styles—Achievement, Self-Actualizing, Humanistic-Encouraging and Affiliative
- Passive/Defensive styles—Approval, Conventional, Dependent and Avoidance
- Aggressive/Defensive styles—Oppositional, Power, Competitive, and Perfectionistic

Since constructive styles are the ones that are needed for a real leadership potential, we will try to give some recommendations in order to improve in each of us the styles grouped in this cluster and to diminish the influences of the other styles.

According to our research, women and men have split the 12 styles quite equally. Thus, in terms of constructive styles, women tend to be better at Humanistic-Encouraging and Affiliative, whereas men scored better at Achievement and Self-Actualizing. When being defensive, there are more women with passive styles (Approval, Conventional, Dependent, and Avoidance) and there are more men with aggressive styles (Oppositional, Power, Competitive, and Perfectionistic). Of course, our research is contextual (Romania in 2015), but we believe at least partly, the results could be generalized, as they seem to be in line with the ideas mentioned in the previous sub-chapter.

5.1. Achievement style

This is clearly an effective thinking style, which increases the leadership potential through a feeling of direction and the capability to establish and attain realistic objectives, better planning, more respect, and self-accomplishment. There are also more promotion opportunities, higher wages, and less stress.

In order to increase the Achievement style, people could work on the following list:

- Focusing more on themselves, by taking into account their real needs
- Taking risks (not very high, though)
- Establishing and working on attaining objectives
- Accepting others' help, when this is the case.

According to our research, it is slightly more often attributed to men (but the difference is not really significant).

5.2. Self-actualizing style

This is the style showing the highest level of personal development and generally manifests through an excellent self-acceptance and acceptance of others as they are. In this case, people are very preoccupied with self-development and release of any negative feeling. They have

more energy, believe in their instincts, and are open to new experiences. Self-actualizing leaders can see new opportunities in every situation and are more flexible.

In order to be more self-actualizing-oriented, people should focus on:

- Living in present and thinking less about past and/or future
- Reducing the temptation to judge others and trying to always accept them as they are
- Choosing to do pleasant things whenever it is possible and reorganizing the unpleasant ones in order to become better activities
- Looking at the problems from multiple facets, in order to see the opportunities
- Allowing their feelings and thoughts to guide them more in their lives.

While women generally seemed to work more in order to obtain the benefits of a self-actualizing style, our research showed that this style was clearly more attributed to men.

5.3. Humanistic-Encouraging style

This style also refers to a positive unconditioned acceptance of others, but in another way. People having this thinking style are very sensitive to the others' needs, value close relationships, and put most of their energy into the others' development. They appreciate sincerely people's strengths and believe in them. They are optimistic and good at inspiring and motivating the others, which makes them great leaders. They are patient and productive.

In order to improve their Humanistic-Encouraging style, people should work on the following:

- Developing their empathy and learning to listen more
- Asking for ideas and feedback from the others
- Being more involved and spending more time with other people
- Focusing on a few persons, encouraging them, and observing the role of this encouragement into their lives
- Looking for opportunities to help and train others
- Showing genuine appreciation for what the others do to you and maybe learning to say 'Thank you' more often
- Being open about their feelings and thoughts, in order to encourage the others to be open as well.

According to our research, women score generally better for this style compared to men.

5.4. Affiliative style

The last, but not the least constructive style is the affiliative one. It refers to a real need for social interaction and interpersonal contact. People having this thinking style value strong relationships more than anything else, work on developing interpersonal skills, and motivate

others with a friendly attitude. They are liked because they focus on teamwork and building trust. By having a collaborative style, they are more productive.

In order to increase their affiliative thinking style, people could do more of the following:

- Looking for opportunities to interact with others and even forcing themselves to initiate talks with persons they do not know very well
- Attending courses and events in order to meet new people
- Focusing on being very close with somebody, in order to build a trustful relationship and to communicate effectively.

As expected, the results of our research showed that women are generally more affiliative compared to men.

5.5. Approval style

This refers to a defensive approach, based on the need to be accepted by others. While it is absolutely normal to want to be approved, the tendency to understand this as a need inevitably leads to a series of problems related to low self-esteem, too much attention to the others' opinions, and difficulties in conflictual situations and in negotiations. Affiliative managers are not good leaders because they tend to be undecided, to postpone discussions, to avoid conflicts, and not to act immediately.

In order to reduce the need for approval, people should focus on:

- Being more self-oriented and expressing their own opinions
- Practicing direct approach of confrontations
- Reflecting on the need for approval and on its causes
- Recognizing their strengths and the fact that they are valuable persons for what they are and not because the others like them or approve them.

The results of our research showed that women tend to feel the need for approval stronger than men and they should work more on diminishing it.

5.6. Conventional style

Another defensive and potential dangerous approach is the one of acting only according to norms. It is potentially dangerous because this way people risk losing their uniqueness and individuality. Conventional managers are not good leaders, because they prefer the standard rules and procedures and generally work in a very predictable environment that hinders innovation. The Rules are more important than ideas.

In order to become less conventional, people should work on the following:

- Understanding that being conventional generally means fewer opportunities for development
- Focusing on their unique skills and strengths

- Taking moderate risks, when it is the case
- Trying new ways of doing things, avoiding routine.

According to our research, women tend to be a little more conventional than men.

5.7. Dependent style

Dependent managers cannot lead because they rather tend to follow and to depend on the direction of the others. It is quite rare for them to disagree with them or to take a moderate risk, as they are very sensitive to the others' feelings and reactions and it is very hard to say 'no'.

In order to become more independent, people should do the following:

- Learning something new in order to become more achievement-oriented
- Establishing small objectives, as a series of small steps can mean very much
- Focusing on making decisions independently
- Trying to take initiatives and move toward the behaviour of a leader.

The results of our research showed that women tend to be more dependent than men and thus they should work more on the above suggestions.

5.8. Avoidance style

People having the avoidance thinking style need protection and keep distance from any potential danger. They are afraid of failure and tend not to take responsibility for their own behaviour. It is hard for them to express their feelings and, in many cases, they focus on their weaknesses rather than on their strengths.

In order to become less avoidance-oriented, people should work on the following:

- Identifying the causes of the avoidance behaviour
- Focusing not only on their feelings but also on the relationships with the others
- Developing self-trust
- Trying to tell the others what they feel and having this, at least for a period, as an objective by itself.

In our research, we found that women tend to have higher avoidance scores than men.

5.9. Oppositional style

This is an aggressive thinking style that shows a tendency to be in disagreement with the others. People having high scores for this style often appear to be distant and seem to look for the others' mistakes. They have a negative attitude and their humour is sarcastic. This approach is a result of their belief that their ideas are better than the others' ideas. While the oppositional style is not a constructive one, the score should not be very low either, because in that case the others would perceive them as naïve and maybe too flexible persons.

In order to decrease their oppositional style, people should focus on:

- Understanding that people would admire them more if not being so oppositional
- Not rejecting ideas only because they are not theirs
- Praising the others more often and avoiding the temptation to criticize.

As expected, the results of our research have shown an increased oppositional style in men when compared to women.

5.10. Power style

The power thinking style measures our tendency to associate our self-recognition with the degree in which we can dominate and control the others. People having this style are motivated by the need for prestige, status, and influence.

In order to decrease their preference toward power, people should focus on the following:

- Trying a more friendly approach and looking at the others' reactions
- Trusting the others and delegating more
- Learning to be a mentor for the others
- Being aware that the need for power actually means a fear
- Obtaining feedback about their behaviour from neutral sources.

According to our research, as expected, men manifest the need for power considerably more than women do.

5.11. Competitive style

This style reflects the need for always comparing with others and obtaining self-recognition through competition. While this is traditionally associated with the idea of success, it was proven that people should rather focus on performance, excellence, on the process by itself, and not on the result of winning in order to really become successful. Actually, people scoring high at competitive style are very aggressive and have a big fear of failure. Competitive managers are preoccupied with the way they are perceived by the others and focus more on being the winners than on performance.

In order to lead more successfully, people should decrease their competitive orientation, and they could do this by working on:

- Focusing on results, on self-achievement, and not on comparisons with others
- Striving to always improve and obtain excellent results
- Cooperating more with others for various projects
- Accepting the fact that no one can be the best at everything.

The results of our research have revealed higher competitive scores for men than for women.

5.12. Perfectionistic style

As the name of this thinking style suggests, it refers to the degree in which we feel the need to be perceived as 'perfect'. Of course, the need for being perfect comes at quite a high price: it is hard to be relaxed, people seem not to be very close, everything is stressful, and priorities are not really clear. This style generally comes with a low level of self-esteem and an excessive preoccupation for avoiding mistakes. Expectations from self and others are huge, and it is very difficult to cope with emotions and to express them. Perfectionistic managers tend to look too much into details and thus do not see very well the whole. While being perfectionist seems not to be a good thing, too low scores for this style also reveal some issues related to working under the potential and lacking motivation and determination.

In order to become less perfections, people should focus on:

- Understanding that the desire to be perfect is actually harmful and time-consuming and becoming aware of the fact that their work is not the same with their value
- Improving relationships
- Lowering expectations in order to obtain more satisfaction.

According to our research and this time unlike our expectations, men seemed to be more perfectionistic than women (with a difference not really significant).

6. Conclusions

Once more, our endeavour has evidenced the fact that the concept of leadership is increasingly important in today's business environment. All the recent changes have called for a new look at the leadership characteristics that guarantee success in the business world. We cannot conclude that men's leadership skills are more powerful and more important compared to the ones of the women or vice versa, but it is clear that gender differences do exist and people should capitalize on them. Business and cultural changes have also shown that, in order to benefit from sustainable development, organizations need a balance in terms of masculinity and femininity, and this can be achieved through a proper understanding of these concepts. A new approach from the one of a one-gender leadership style (masculine or feminine) certainly needs, in our opinion, to be replaced with a vision of both genders complementing each other. This is perfectly justifiable when looking at the current leadership styles and the fact that they are very rarely based on traditional abilities, instead being characterized by innovation skills, flexibility, intuition, and a people-oriented approach.

Besides the analysis that was presented in this chapter, we wanted to define a few initiatives for the future which might contribute to the normalization of the business world in terms of gender equality and favourable performance environment. In our opinion, there are two main directions that can be taken. The first refers to management education: leadership skills programs; leadership courses in all university programs; extracurricular activities that would develop leadership skills; mentoring programs that would contribute to personal growth, confidence,

and self-motivation; and strategic thinking (forward looking). The second refers to managerial practice: developing leadership skills through training and coaching; adopting and implementing adequate, non-discriminatory career strategies that capitalize on leadership skills; practicing a provisional type of management; adopting an appropriate managerial style based on performance; an evaluation criteria that will point out the required characteristics of a potential leader; a set of values (equity, professionalism, competence, team spirit, etc.) that are to be obeyed by every member of the organization; and strategies that will later be shared with all the employees.

One of our main concerns was to not transform this text into a manifest to support women in their profession and society. Our approach was to be as neutral and objective as possible because we think this subject is not a trend but an essential one: can we remain fixed in our traditional approach, although we are aware that current economic realities reveal certain skills that women possess at a very high level? The pragmatism which characterizes most of the businessmen will make them choose efficient solutions for the companies they run and, if this will lead to a more powerful presence of women in top management, then our society will become more solid and balanced.

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