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Competencies and expectations of a woman leader

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of the research presented in this paper was to identify the managerial competencies of a woman leader. The first part of this paper explores the issue of leader competencies as they appear in the management literature. On the basis of the conducted research, the second part attempts to answer the question: which competencies are the most important for the leadership role of women in contemporary organisational reality? Women have the competence potential to be leaders and to be equally as successful as men. In view of the results of the literature review and the conclusions of the survey conducted among the employees of the organisation under research, it was largely possible to confirm the above thesis. Women are able to fulfil themselves in the aforementioned organisation, succeeding in leadership positions with adequate competence and knowledge. However, there are still quite a few barriers they still have to overcome. Introducing an explicit gender equality policy in the organisation would result in increasingly better results. This paper presents the results of research carried out by a company operating throughout Poland. The findings are very interesting and encourage research on a larger scale. They represent a valuable source of information for managers responsible for working with executives, their functioning and the achievement of the set organisational goals. In turn, for those responsible for recruiting managers, the findings may be useful in terms of developing a profile of the manager/team leader, particularly in identifying key soft competencies.

KEYWORDS

competence, woman leader, competence profile, leadership

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Introduction

The 1980s and 1990s witnessed a real breakthrough in management science in terms of publications on professional competence. During this period, the first competence models were developed. They were created in response to the needs of major transnational corporations and associated with modern technology. It was acknowledged that the scale of operations, technological change and multiculturalism constituted significant challenges for the organisations. Initial work was directed towards the search for a model of the manager, and later the employee, to ensure consistency of organisational culture and management in a situation of increasing challenges. However, it soon became apparent that many more aspects needed to be addressed.

Despite such tremendous social progress affecting a significant part of people's lives, the gender division continues to be a factor that painfully places women in weak positions, where they struggle to prove their own value and strength.

When examining the situation of women in today's business and comparing it to their situation a few decades ago, the differences in the treatment of women and men will be minimal. This is influenced by persisting factors such as the increase in woman unemployment, the pay gap, lower levels of women's vocational activity, and, even more so, the much smaller number of women in senior managerial positions (Walby, Olsen, 2002). This situation is mainly due to the numerous barriers and obstacles that women still have to overcome. Nonetheless, the professional situation of women has changed significantly in recent years compared to previous years. This is related to the evolution of the modern labour market – more and more organisations are recognising the benefits of hiring women and appointing them to management positions, where they fulfil their role as leaders. Frequently, they are more competent than men but are still overlooked for senior positions, facing the so-called glass ceiling. It is also worth mentioning the transformation that has also taken place in Polish society. Until recently, there was only the traditional family model, in which the man was expected to go to work and earn money to provide for the home and family, while the woman was expected to take care of the children and the household.

Today, such a model is increasingly being replaced by a partnership model and, consequently, the number of women who want to be vocationally active, who want to be educated and who want to acquire the necessary

competencies to meet future challenges on the labour market is increasing. Unfortunately, despite the number of transformations, women still encounter numerous barriers in their career paths. This paper attempts to identify the determinants of the competence profile of a woman leader.

1. Leader's competences

The term leader originates from the word "lead", which means to lead, to direct, to be the first, as well as to lead a particular group and to set the rules independently. In society, the word "leader" describes well the position or function that a person who leads others may perform. As the idea of transformational leadership states, an effective leader should be someone who creates a vision for the future, motivates and inspires other people to engage with that vision, manages its implementation, and coaches and builds their team so that the group more effectively achieves the set vision. When people are deciding if they respect someone as a leader, they do not think about their attributes; rather, they observe what said person does to understand who they really are. They use this observation to tell if they are an honourable and trustworthy leader or a self-serving person who misuses their authority to look good and get promoted (Sharma, Jain, 2013).

A leader is "a personal role model – an example to follow as a model of success, which includes not only behaviours and ways of reacting but also views, values and even vocabulary and style of communicating with others" (Jelemiak et al., 2014, p. 28). Leadership is not a tangible creation, but rather a social image shaped by the prism of culture, tradition, and ideals rooted and translated into cognitive patterns (Kurek, 2022).

Competencies constitute an important social category, both from the perspective of an organisation and an individual. They determine the suitability of a human individual for a specific profession, decide on the allocation of tasks and functions, and determine the social-professional status, the amount of wages and salaries, as well as promotion (Mumford et al., 2000).

As the concept of competences is defined in various ways, their classification is made using different criteria. Following are several criteria for the division of competences (Cantwell, Piscitello, 2000; El-Saba, 2000; Peterson, Peterson, 2008; Ciabuschi et al., 2012):

– accuracy of definition (defined in general or in detail);
– substantive scope (narrow and broad competences);

– content (professional, social, business, conceptual competences);
– source of competence acquisition – (division into formal and acquired competences);
– accessibility (the organisation's own competences and those acquired by means of "borrowing");
– purpose (general competence, common to all employees, and specialised competence);
– time perspective (current and anticipated competences);
– measurability (easily or elusively measurable competences);
– ownership (individual and group competences).

One of the first divisions of competencies was made by R. Katz in 1955, who identified three groups of managerial competences and called them skills: technical skills, human skills, conceptual skills. This concept implies a varying importance of each group of skills depending on the level of management. The more senior the position in the organisational hierarchy, the more important conceptual skills become, while technical and human skills become relatively less important.

A good leader should have some of the basic skills from the start. These are individual qualities, already acquired earlier in the education process, which should be seen as a favourable beginning in order to learn further specific leadership competences. It should be noted that the results of such learning may vary for everyone. On the other hand, some specialists believe that without having previously acquired relevant leadership competences, it is not possible to become a conscious and successful leader. It seems that many people (Kolzow, 2014) assume that people some are born with a natural capacity to lead, everybody else does not, and there is not much that can be done about it. Despite these general perceptions to the contrary, leaders are not born; they are nurtured.

There is a distinction between technical competences, also referred to as hard skills, and behavioural competences, also referred to as soft skills (Armstrong, 2011). Hard skills include the knowledge and measurable skills that one is able to acquire in the course of the process of education. They are necessary for the performance of a specific job. Examples of such skills include specialised courses, knowledge of foreign languages, holding a category of driving license, or knowing how to use a piece of computer software. Soft skills, on the other hand, are different and should be fully focused on. They are harder to measure or assess on a specific scale, and often such skills are referred to as personal or interpersonal skills. For employers, soft skills are currently more desirable, as it is easier to train hard

skills than to invest in a series of training courses to develop soft skills, which may ultimately be non-existent. Soft competences may also include social skills that enable a person to, for example, communicate well with other people, or skills that enable a person to make good decisions in crisis situations, stressful situations, or situations that are defined as "difficult".

Nowadays, more and more people believe that good leaders are more effective if they have more social competences, which are part of the group of soft skills. They enable a leader to have a good attitude every day, to be committed, to be cooperative, to be constantly active, and also to have the desire to educate themselves systematically, to acquire knowledge, skills and experience. It is also a predisposition for and ease in influencing others, nurturing positive relationships and leading effectively in aspects such as teamwork (Hogg, 2001; Podolny et al., 2004), motivating subordinates and finding and then developing their potential, which may be invisible at first sight. It all boils down to the fact that leadership is a skill that can be learned by acquiring certain character traits or skills.

These are skills derived from emotional intelligence (Goleman, 2020). The consequence of possessing such competences is exceptional performance and success at work. After all, it is also the ability to make other people react the way one wants them to. At the core of emotional competence are two extremely important skills: empathy and social skills. Emotional competence, in turn, may be divided into:

- personal competence – this includes self-awareness, self-regulation, and motivation;
- social competence – meaning empathy and social skills in a broad sense.

Thus, self-awareness is defined as emotional self-awareness, accurate self-esteem, and self-confidence. Self-regulation, on the other hand, includes self-control, self-reliance, conscientiousness, adaptability, and innovation. In turn, motivation includes striving for achievement, commitment, initiative, and optimism.

Soft skills are derived from emotional intelligence and refer to the ability to recognise one's own and others' feelings in order to motivate and empower oneself and others, and to effectively manage the emotions that exist within one's self and one's relationships (Goleman, 2020).

A particular presentation of this vision was provided by J. Adair (2004), who identified 7 qualities essential for a successful leader:

- self-confidence,
- humility,

– honesty,
– toughness,
– warmth,
– integrity.

The first and most important is self-confidence. Subordinates will always notice if their leader has this confidence and belief in their abilities (Conger, Kanungo, 1987). It is also self-esteem. People with this competence look confident and have presence on a day-to-day basis, but are also able to state their opinion on all kinds of topics or manifest their views on important issues. They are determined and know how to manage difficult decisions effectively, without pressure from other people. By developing this trait, a successful leader will also be able to develop other leadership competencies. However, care must be taken to ensure that self-confidence does not turn into unnecessary arrogance.

Another important quality is humility, without which self-confidence should not exist. This is a rare trait, but one that distinguishes the best leaders. Such dominance is a testament to strength and not, as some believe, weakness. This trait works perfectly in tandem with self-confidence, as the leader is able to admit mistakes and take responsibility. It also indicates to subordinates that the leader is only human and does not know the answers to all questions. Humility helps to develop respect from subordinates.

The next trait is honesty. It is a quality that every person, especially a leader, should demonstrate, but it is also the ability to be honest with oneself, and with one's team or subordinates. Honesty allows people to feel that the action one performs for them is preceded by the credibility of one's intentions, words, and deeds. It is important to remember that every action may later be imitated by the team, so a competent leader should lead by example. Leaders must demand as much from their people as they do from themselves. A leader setting a high standard and then keeping their word means that they will be able to reach it through hard work. With such integrity, a leader will earn the respect they deserve.

Toughness is a desirable and listed quality. The appropriate level of discipline should not be forgotten, and a successful leader is one who demands a great effort from their people. With these demands, they should be persistent and relentless, because without daily encouragement of the team to overcome their limits, the group will not achieve anything together.

The penultimate, equally important quality is warmth. Finding the balance between being tough and engaging one's heart is the key to success.

One should invest as much heart as mind in everything they do. A good leader must take care of their people every day, be able to listen to them if they are facing certain problems and difficulties, but above all, they should not forget that every person should be treated with respect.

Last, but not least, is integrity. A leader who is able to maintain their integrity is a complete person. They are a person who lives according to their own predetermined rules. Thus, they are able to respect other people's rules and live in harmony with them. They bind everything together, ensuring that the whole team knows what they are aiming for and what each individual's particular task is. An inclusive leader respects the given word, does not make empty promises, knows what people expect of them, and is able to clearly express their expectations to others. In addition, they have fundamental principles, believing that the behaviour they exhibit is consistent with their morals, ethics, and all high standards.

The criterion for this classification is the area of functioning at work for which the individual competences are responsible (Delamare-Le Deist, Winterton, 2005). In their holistic model of competences, the authors distinguish four categories: cognitive competences (cognitive), social competences, functional competences, and meta-competences. Attention should be drawn to categories not previously discussed, namely: functional competence and meta-competence. The former are responsible for the quality of actions taken and specific tasks performed. The latter, on the other hand, determine the ability to learn, and to cope with new situations and changing conditions for achieving set goals. The latter division of competencies is referred to by the authors, citing it in relation to the competency model of the leader of a military organisation (Balcerzyk, Zapała, 2020). It should be observed that the spectrum of competencies and roles of managers or leaders cited in the literature depends, to a great extent, on the authors' research perspective (Simerson, Venn, 2006; Balcerzyk, 2021; Czainska, 2021). Competences are a multidimensional concept, while the components of competences differ, taking into account the American, British or Polish approach (Kurek, 2022). The diversity of approaches is due to the specificity of the research areas, but also to the comprehensiveness of management science, which provides a variety of perspectives on the subject.

What is unquestionable, however, is that the organisation's expectations of the competencies of a woman and male leader/manager are the same – effectiveness and achievement of the organisation's goals. Different competences are therefore indicated for leaders operating in an international, multicultural and multigenerational environment, and others in relation

to local communities, public organisations and uniformed services. The challenges of a contemporary leader are primarily dealing with the difficulties of a VUCA environment, i.e. in a turbulent environment. The acronym VUCA refers to an environment characterised by: volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity (Department of Command, Leadership, and Management, 1998). Leading change is a complex undertaking. Leaders faced with imposed change should be mindful of their role as change executors and their concurrent ability to shape change. Being aware of their own reactions to change and supportive behaviour may mitigate the (potential) negative impact they have on their followers (Heyden et al., 2016; Walk, 2023; Balcerzyk, 2023). Leadership is celebrated as an important factor for the successful implementation of organisational change (Kotter, 1996). It may therefore be assumed that meta-competences are becoming particularly important nowadays.

2. Methods and characteristics of the research sample

The research presented in this paper was conducted at a company specialising in solving individual and entrepreneurial HR problems. This company operates nationwide, however, for reasons of policy, the company has requested to remain anonymous.

The basic tool was a questionnaire, which included research questions aimed at obtaining the respondents' opinions on the key competencies of a woman leader. The analysis of the survey was to identify those of the presented competences of a woman leader, which most significantly influence the effectiveness of her actions. The study identified barriers to the functioning of the woman leader. The data obtained in the study provided an objective source of data, further analysed to diagnose the key competences of the woman leader.

The main research question was: What competences should a woman leader have?

To detail the main research question, the following specific research questions were formulated:

1. What management style is most often chosen by a woman leader?
2. Do women get promoted as often as men?
3. How do women build authority in managerial positions?
4. Which factors limit the appointment of women to managerial positions?
5. Are women more qualified to manage people than men?

The characteristics of the population under study had a key influence on the results of the research conducted, namely:

- the gender distribution of the research sample was even: 58% were women and 42% were men;
- the organisation in question was mainly employing young people, representatives of generation Z – due to the fact that they belong to this generation, they are by nature open-minded and creative, however, fully focused on respect and clearly defined goals;
- they were mostly university graduates with excellent language skills. Due to their very short seniority and limited experience, they were open to change and quickly adapted when new adjustments were needed to improve the overall system.

3. Identification of competencies and expectations of a woman leader – research overview

Although the Polish constitution guarantees gender equality and women are successfully pursuing their careers, unfortunately, some of them still have to fight harder and more often for managerial positions than men. As the survey shows, the vast majority of the respondents meet women in leadership positions frequently or on a daily basis. This is a good sign, showing that the situation of women in Poland is constantly improving. Unfortunately, almost a quarter of the respondents still rarely or even extremely rarely meet woman leaders who successfully occupy senior positions. This may be related to the widespread discrimination that women in Poland have to face, often trying to break through the so-called glass ceiling. However, none of the respondents claimed that only men or only women should be promoted. Promotion is for those who have the right competence (aptitude, knowledge, etc.) for the position. Gender should not be of any significance.

In order to identify the management style most frequently chosen by a woman leader, the survey respondents were given a choice of five management styles: authoritative, democratic, coercive, partnership, and coaching (Table 1). Approximately 38% of the respondents stated that the partnership style is most frequently applied by women. The democratic style was indicated by 26% of respondents, while 18% selected the coaching style. The authoritative and coercive styles were each indicated by 9% of the participants each.

Table 1. Management style most frequently chosen by a woman leader

No.	Response categories	Percentage
1.	Partnership style	38
2.	Democratic style	26
3.	Coaching style	18
4.	Authoritative style	9
5.	Coercive style	9
	Total	100

Source: own research.

The results of the survey clearly indicate that there is no division between male and woman leadership styles. Women successfully alternate between leadership styles. The vast majority of the respondents indicated a democratic or partnership style, both of which are effective, holistic styles, built primarily on a strong foundation of communication and partnership. Additionally, such a relationship-based style is in harmony with the woman personality. With such tools, women become more effective when influencing those around them. It is management through caring for team members, but also listening to their problems and taking action to solve them together with group members. This approach to subordinates deepens relationships, enhances trust and develops cooperation. It can therefore be concluded that women develop their authority, or position in the organisation, by engaging and winning people over rather than by trying to overcome resistance or demonstrating their superiority and dominance.

The respondents were also asked whether they thought women were promoted less frequently than men (Figure 1). The largest group (36%) responded that women are promoted rather less frequently, with 20% stating "rather not". Whereas 13% of the respondents were confident in their opinion and felt that women were far less likely to be promoted. One in four respondents did not have a clear view on this issue. The survey therefore indicates that women are promoted less frequently than men. A lack of promotion is often a sign of discrimination, even though women are often better educated. Unfortunately, women still experience more barriers to their career paths than men. They are usually employed in lower managerial positions. Frequently, they face numerous obstacles that prevent them from being employed in senior positions, while it is the diversity

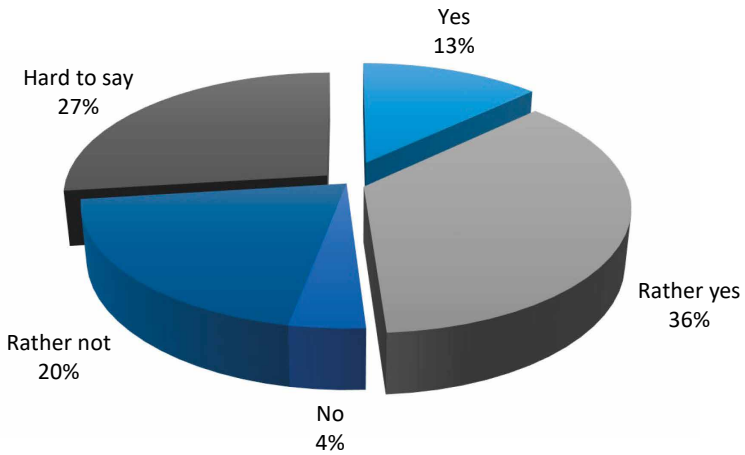

Figure 1. Whether women are promoted less often than men in the opinion of the respondents

Source: own research.

of both men and women in the workplace that is proving to be a factor for success and a leverage for efficiency.

The research attempted to build a competence profile of a woman leader (Figure 2). The participants were given a choice of 19 propositions, from which they were asked to select a maximum of five that were, in their opinion, key and fundamental. The most frequently chosen by the respondents were responsibility, self-belief, self-confidence, firmness, and courage. Slightly lower ranked were ambition, assertiveness, honesty, ability to manage difficult situations, charisma, and consistency. The least-often selected competencies were empathy, flexibility, willingness to take risks, humility and other. From the research shown, it can be concluded that women, in the opinion of the respondents, should above all be confident and responsible and should believe in themselves and their abilities. However, due to the constant competition with men and the constant need to prove to others that they are valuable leaders, women lose their enthusiasm for work and stop believing in their own strength, submitting to opinions, prejudices, and stereotypes. When men speak openly about their ambition, women remain silent, despite being well educated, and possessing key knowledge and unique competencies. In the opinion of the respondents, the competencies of a leader and a woman leader converge. The results of the study presented made it clear that there are no separate competence requirements for men or women because skills simply do not have a gender.

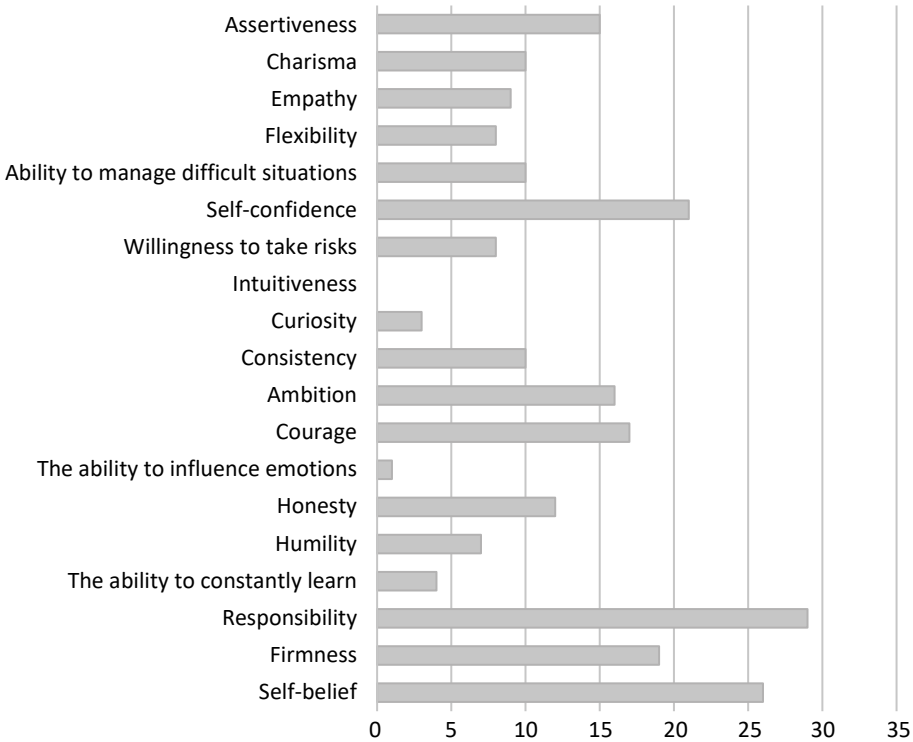

Figure 2. Competency profile of a woman leader in the opinion of the respondents [%]
Source: own research.

The research attempts to identify factors limiting the appointment of women to leadership positions at tactical and strategic levels. The respondents believe that the main reason there are fewer women in senior positions is the stereotype that men are better leaders than women. Another constraint, in the opinion of the respondents, is the family. Women are more willing to make sacrifices for their family rather than for their career than men. This is related to another indicated factor, which is availability. Women are not as available as men. Other indicated factors include conservative values instilled from childhood, due to which women make different career choices than men, and the fact that women are more likely to follow their emotions when making decisions. By being more emotional, women are able to show more empathy and, therefore, less aggressiveness. They are also able to read all emotional expressions better or express themselves better and are much more gentle and warmer than men. The least important factor is self-esteem and the statement that business is an area in which men perform better.

In response to the question of what authority women leaders most often have – formal or informal – the majority of the respondents (62%) attributed women leaders with informal authority. Formal authority was indicated by the remaining 38% of the respondents.

If informal authority is the one most often bestowed on women in senior managerial positions, it demonstrates their strong leadership skills. This type of authority is primarily shaped by the competencies (knowledge, experience, or skills) they possess. What skills shape this type of authority? Continuous relationship-building with subordinates, authenticity, and responsibility for the personnel. It is also essential for a leader to be able to hold people accountable for the tasks and responsibilities entrusted to them. Formal authority, on the other hand, as mentioned earlier, derives solely from the title, rank, or position held. A lack of ability to acquire informal authority may be associated with a loss of respect and obedience among subordinates, and in time, with difficulties in performing tasks and the loss of formal authority.

The above research question implied another one, namely the question of factors shaping the authority of a woman leader. The respondents were asked to identify the factors that have the greatest influence on the development of authority by women leaders. Eleven choices were offered, from which the respondents were asked to rate and determine their impact (on a scale from 1 to 5) on building up the authority of a woman leader: building relationships with subordinates, being competent, inspiring, admitting mistakes, empathy, experience, neat dress code (Marana et al., 2021), expert/specialised knowledge, respect for people, status and title, and age (Table 2).

The participants assessed that the authority of a leader is determined in turn by Respect for people and Competences. A key factor rated as very high is Experience. Another important factor is the ability to communicate with employees, which has a positive impact on Building relationships with subordinates. Expertise/specialist knowledge, Empathy, and Inspiring people to take action are also considered significant. Admitting one's own mistakes and, at the same time, a Neat dress code were slightly less favoured by the respondents. Social status, academic titles, and Age were considered the least important.

At the beginning of the 20th century, women were already slowly entering the world of vocational life, training and acquiring the necessary competences to improve their financial situation and social status. This has been going on for almost a century now, and one would think that

Table 2. Factors shaping the authority of a woman leader

No.	Response categories	Value	Level
1.	Building relationships with subordinates	193	3
2.	Being competent	202	2
3.	Inspiring	173	
4.	Admitting mistakes	161	
5.	Empathy	178	
6.	Experience	191	4
7.	Neat dress code	159	
8.	Expert/specialised knowledge	190	5
9.	Respect for people	205	1
10.	Status and title	144	
11.	Age	111	

Source: own research.

women have come a long enough way in fighting for their rights to also fulfil themselves professionally and not just in terms of their families. Unfortunately, there are still signs of unequal treatment of women (European Commission, 2022), as the results of the above research illustrate in detail. Only approximately 20% of those surveyed have never encountered any inequality in the treatment of women, and this is still not enough. Women have to fight against stereotypes and jokes and accept tactless jokes with pride, which often make them uncomfortable, but they cannot show it as they will appear too emotional. Research also shows that women struggle with financial issues. They are overlooked for promotions, rewards, and recognitions. The gender pay gap for the same work also continues to emerge. In addition, it is mostly women who are more involved in family matters. They are the ones who take more care of the home and the children and often require understanding from superiors with unexpected family issues. Naturally, the goal is not to ensure that women are favoured and have special privileges at work other than those possessed by men, because that is not the point. The important thing is to even out the inequalities that exist between the treatment of men and women.

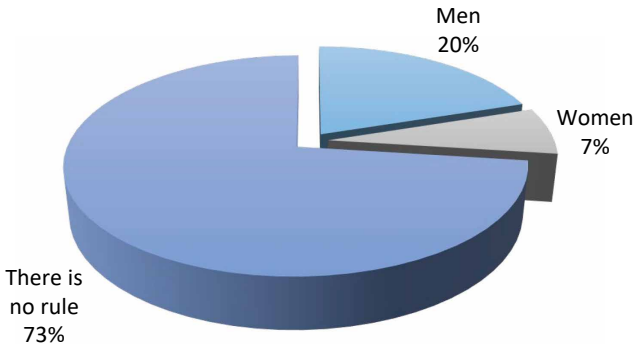

Figure 3. Competency profile of a woman leader in the opinion of the respondents
Source: own research results.

The respondents were also asked who is more predisposed to leadership positions: women or men. The vast majority of the respondents answered that there is no rule (73%). Some respondents, however, indicated that it is men who should be in management positions (20%), while only 7% of the respondents indicated that women are most suitable.

Considering the results outlined above, it can be concluded that today's women leaders do not need to emulate men in any way to be equally successful. Years ago, there was a perception in society that men supposedly possessed personality traits that were more appropriate and sufficient for leadership roles and that men, in particular, were better leaders. Nowadays, the changing views treat equality between men and women as the standard, with women proving to be just as effective as men (Takizawa et al., 2022). However, current developments should in no way affect recruitment within organisations. Not every woman will prove to be a successful and effective leader and, similarly, not every man will be successful in a senior position. Leaders should be selected on the basis of their competence first and foremost.

4. Discussion

It could be stated that different values are now required for leaders than those applied by the "male part" of the business world. The environment is now mainly based on knowledge, experience, and acquired competencies. Organisations are beginning to recognise the benefits of gender diversity in the workplace. The days when leaders used a fear-based approach to management are now being replaced by partnerships and trust-building

relationships. However, this does not mean that the selection of a leader should only be based on the gender factor. Nowadays, effective leaders are required to have clearly defined and set goals, make sound decisions quickly, and build relationships with the group.

The questions must therefore be asked:

- With a clearly defined gender equality policy, is the organisation able to perform better than it currently does?
- What does it really mean for someone to be a leader?
- What competencies should a leader have, or what should distinguish them?
- Are the qualities of a leader merely innate, or can they be learned?

It is a long-standing issue – does one have to be born a leader or can one, by developing their knowledge and acquiring experience and skills, become one?

Conclusions

Taking into account the results of the literature review and the conclusions derived from the company's employee survey, it was established that women are able to fulfil themselves professionally in the organisation surveyed, achieving success in management positions with the right competencies. However, there are still quite a few barriers and constraints that they have to face.

On the basis of the survey results and their in-depth analysis, the following conclusions and recommendations emerge:

- the survey indicated that the company's employees require from their leaders an approach based on partnership and positive relations;
- the main competences that employees value in leaders are, above all, responsibility, the ability to deal with difficult situations, and self-confidence;
- in the organisation studied, there are numerous women in leadership positions;
- woman leaders successfully apply different leadership styles, adapting them to appropriate situations and people;
- in most situations, women build their authority by basing it on a partnership style, thus harmonising with the woman personality;
- the majority of the respondents believe that women are promoted less frequently than men;

- the main factor responsible for the presence of fewer women in leadership positions in the organisation is the perception that men are better leaders;
- the woman leader in the surveyed organisation enjoys mostly informal authority, i.e. recognition and power derived from professionalism, professional competence, her experience, and good relations with people;
- the main issue of unequal treatment of women is the stereotypical thinking of managers when assigning tasks and responsibilities and the inappropriate jokes and teasing directed at women;
- in the opinion of the employees surveyed, there is no rule regarding the gender of a leader.

The last statement suggests that young people do not want to base leadership on stereotypes, even though these still operate in the thinking of women as leaders (Deaux, Lewis, 1984; Diekman, Eagly, 2000; Chugh, Sahgal, 2007; Eagly, Wood, 2012). What is promising is that they are open-minded in their views and thus can make a difference.

The research discussed leads to the conclusion that authority-building among women is influenced by a number of factors, not all of which are equally important or crucial. Age, position, and academic titles are not as important as the respect for people and competence chosen by the respondents. A leader in a managerial position should be able to admit their mistakes, and should first of all "be human" to the people they manage. They should understand their subordinates and be aware that they are not specially programmed machines and may make mistakes. Failures are inherent in our lives, and it is important for a leader to be able to develop relationships with their subordinates, as respect for people was a key factor for the survey respondents when choosing factors that influence women's authority. In the world of new technologies, people are still the most valuable asset to an organisation – not equipment or procedures. Hence, the myth of a leader who is able to make people achieve the organisation's mission and at the same time feel happy still seems to be valid (Balcerzyk, Zapała, 2020).

It should be emphasised that there are no separate guidelines for having a specific suit of competencies for men or women, as leadership skills have no gender. However, it is necessary to emphasise the validity of having a clearly defined gender policy in place in the organisation in order to achieve greater results. The leadership prospects for women managers is a critical issue in gender equality.

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Profil kompetencyjny kobiety-lidera

STRESZCZENIE Głównym celem badań przedstawionych w artykule była identyfikacja kompetencji menadżerskich lidera-kobiety. W pierwszej części artykułu przedstawiono problematykę kompetencji lidera w literaturze o zarządzaniu. W drugiej części na podstawie przeprowadzonych badań podjęto próbę odpowiedzi na pytanie: które kompetencje są najistotniejsze w pełnieniu roli lidera przez kobiety we współczesnej rzeczywistości organizacyjnej? Kobiety posiadają potencjał kompetencyjny do bycia liderem oraz do osiągania sukcesów na równi z mężczyznami. Biorąc pod uwagę wyniki analizy literatury oraz wnioski wywodzące się z badania przeprowadzonego wśród pracowników badanej organizacji, w dużej mierze udało się potwierdzić powyższą tezę. Kobiety są w stanie spełniać się w wyżej wspomnianej organizacji, osiągają sukcesy na stanowiskach kierowniczych, posiadając odpowiednie kompetencje i wiedzę. Jednakże istnieje jeszcze sporo barier, z którymi wciąż muszą się mierzyć. Wprowadzenie jasno określonej polityki równości płci w organizacji pozwoli osiągać coraz to lepsze efekty. W artykule przedstawiono wyniki badań przeprowadzonych przez firmę działającą na terenie całej Polski. Odkrycia są bardzo interesujące i zachęcają do badań na większą skalę. Stanowią cenne źródło informacji dla menedżerów odpowiedzialnych za współpracę z kadrą kierowniczą, ich funkcjonowanie i osiąganie założonych celów organizacyjnych. Z kolei dla osób odpowiedzialnych za rekrutację menedżerów ustalenia mogą być przydatne w budowaniu profilu menedżera/lidera zespołu, szczególnie w identyfikowaniu kluczowych kompetencji miękkich.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE kompetencja, kobieta-lider, profil kompetencyjny, przywództwo

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Author contributions

All authors contributed to the interpretation of results and writing of the paper. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Ethical statement

The research complies with all national and international ethical requirements.