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A male perspective on female leaders

Multiple case study from four male dominated organizations

Master's thesis in Business Administration

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Master's Thesis in Business Administration

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Abstract

Although women are increasingly entering managerial positions, still they remain underrepresented in decision-making positions. Within the literature it has been argued that women still face barriers while ascending the leadership ladder. The Glass Ceiling Turned Labyrinth is introduced and elaborated on. A broad discussion on its dimensions, namely Human Capital, Prejudice and Gender Differences, provides a better understanding of the obstacles, which women must overcome throughout their carrier. By navigating the Labyrinth, women are given possible solutions to overcome the identified inequality within organizations and are encouraged to enter managerial positions.

We argue that the stimulation of gender diversity will contribute to economic growth and allow organizations to seize the Gender Dividend. In order to fulfill the purpose of this research and provide an answer to the research questions, a qualitative method has been applied. The multiple case study was focused on male dominated organizations from Poland and The Netherlands. The data have been obtained through semi-structured interviews, in which the interview questions were built around four main areas, which were perceptions, expectations, relationships and prejudices of men towards a female manager. An abductive approach allowed us to analyze the insights we gained from the empirical data.

Interestingly, some of the research outcomes are in line with previously discussed theory, whereas other parts completely disagree with the literature. From the analysis it can be concluded that female leaders in male dominated organizations are not only being appreciated for finding a balance in masculine and feminine traits, moreover they are valued for their obtained skills, experience and knowledge. None of the interviewees showed explicit objections towards women managers. Through this study, we proved that investing in gender diversity programs remains to be truly beneficial for organizations and society and can make an impact towards gender equality.

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I Introduction

"If Lehman Brothers had been Lehman Brothers and Sisters we probably wouldn't have had our financial meltdown." – Betty Spence, President of National Association of Female Executives.

I.1 Background

According to a report conducted by the European Commission (2011) on Equality between Women and Men in 2010, women continue to be underrepresented in leadership and decision-making positions in businesses. Although women account for nine in every twenty workers (45,4 % in 2009), they are occupying less than a third (32,8 %) of the leadership positions (European Commission, 2011) (Figure 1.1).

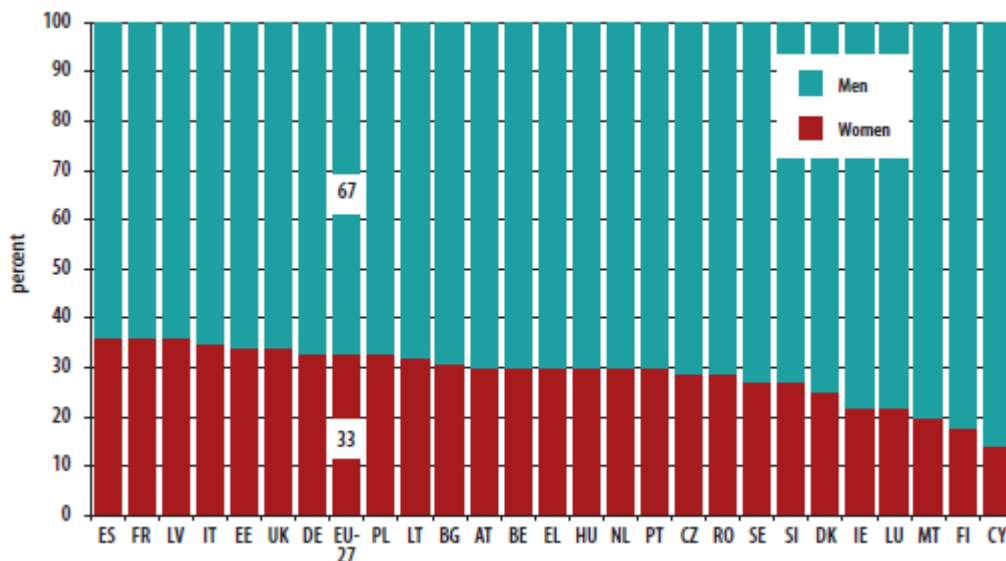


Figure 1.1 Leaders of business. Source: Eurostat, 2010.

Besides, the same report by the European Commission concludes that many of the largest employers in the European Union still do not provide a working environment which encourages female leaders to flourish, especially in top positions. If one takes a look, for example, at the situation in Poland, according to a report conducted by Deloitte Poland (2012), there are around 40 percent of women in managerial positions, but only 28 percent of the board members are female and just 4 percent of them hold functions in the top of management. To higher or lower extent, this situation can be found in countries all over the world. The United Nations Development Program uses the Gender Inequality Index (GII) to measure the position of women in every country. The GII reflects women's disadvantages in three dimensions: reproductive health, empowerment and the labor market. According to the index 17 out of 20 most equal in case of gender countries (with smallest gender gap, considering the researched dimensions) are European (United Nations Development Programme, 2012).

When it comes down to managerial positions, women do enter more frequently in these kind of positions, but their movement towards the top loses its pace through their carrier. A study conducted by Kwon and Meyersson Milgrom (2010) shows, that in a situation of a

major change as for example in a merger or in an acquisition, when the number of top female managers increases in an organization, women are less likely to quit and men tend to leave more frequently. This is part of same-gender attraction and opposite-gender aversion. Though, Kwon and Meyersson Milgrom (2010) came to an interesting conclusion: men seem to welcome new women in organizations, when they form small minority, but with their growing number the resistance appears. The authors plead that this very important problem, which needs to be solved, as it has an influence on employees' turnover, thus on the yearly proportion between persons leaving a company and being employed in the same organization. When this rate is high, many financial resources must be committed in order to attract, recruit and train, which is why organizations must try hard to keep this rate low (Goodwin, Groth, & Frenkel, 2011). The situation of male attraction towards working with a certain number of women, but possessing an aversion towards having too many of them in a company can explain the recent situation, when after years of employing more women, the trend started to weaken (Kwon & Meyersson Milgrom, 2010).

On the other hand, Stead (2012) claims that female leadership is changing and it has become more attractive for women. Nevertheless, amongst others, Powell (1990) states that male and female managers certainly differ in their success and style within the managerial ranks and that women still face barriers in their way to the top. The invisible barriers preventing women from ascending into leadership positions were created and defined in 1970s in the United States by the term of "the glass ceiling effect" (Wirth, 2001). Wirth defines this effect as the invisible artificial barriers, born from prejudices, which prevent women from advancing to senior positions in companies. However, Klenke (2011), states that evidence suggests that women are currently breaking through this glass ceiling. She also mentions that when women do reach executive positions, but they are often faced with yet another barrier called the "glass wall". This synonym became a metaphor for the barrier that surrounds powerful male executives, meaning that although companies are promoting women to break the glass ceiling, they are faced with even more barriers when holding leadership positions.

Eagly and Carli (2007a) do not believe in this so called "glass ceiling" and argue for a leadership labyrinth. They see female situation on the labor market as a journey with challenges for women all along the way to the top of leadership, which is hard and full of curves, can and has been successfully navigated by women.

1.2 Problem statement

Women are increasingly entering managerial positions that before have been occupied only by men (Mierzejewska, 2013), which has resulted in conducted studies about the differences between male and female managers. Abundant literature is available describing the female view on women's leadership.

Eagly and Karau (2002) state that although there is a general agreement on women facing more barriers than men in becoming a leader, especially for managerial positions which are male dominated, fewer agreements exists about the behavior of women perceived by men

in companies dominated by them, once they are actually attaining such roles. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate the relation between female managers and their co-workers of the opposite gender in order to get insides on the issue.

Besides, Ely and Rhode (2010) argue that a lot of work has to be done in order to improve the situation of female managers, and this includes participation of the society, which has the obligation to ensure the equality between genders. Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2001) claim that research is needed on prejudices which women may encounter in leadership roles, especially if these roles are male-dominated or if they behave in an especially masculine way in the organizations. Furthermore, Pellegrino, D'Amato and Welsberg (2011) state that the topic of female leadership is highly relevant for the future to ensure gender equality.

According to Korabik and Ayman (2007), female leaders need to develop a better understanding of the impact of the organizational culture and prejudice in their workplace. Women in management do not only need to educate themselves, moreover they need to educate their colleagues as well. This means that, when it comes to their own leadership behavior, Korabik and Ayman (2007) argue for increasing the self-awareness of women, which in turn will give them knowledge about their blind spots and make them more conscious about how they are perceived as leaders. In particular, women need to pay attention to their interpersonal relationships when they are attaining leadership roles in male-dominated surroundings. These kind of relationships involve some level of interdependence. People share their thoughts and feelings, influence each other to some extent and engage in activities together. This interdependence leads to a change or impact on one member of the relationship and will also have an impact on the other member (Korabik & Ayman, 2007). This will contribute to the avoidance of judgment according to stereotypes and the result of women being perceived as more effective leaders. However, we still do not know enough about the male perspective on above mentioned elements. To stimulate equality between women and men in leadership positions and to uncover barriers which come from a male perspective on female leadership, this perspective needs to be scrutinized.

1.3 Purpose

The purpose of this study is to analyze the male perspective on female leaders in male dominated organizations, to identify the existing barriers for women to become leaders and to suggest possible ways of overcoming these barriers.

1.4 Definitions

Many definitions of the word “leadership” exist. In our opinion the definition given by Northouse (2010): “Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” is the most appropriate one and therefore it will be used.

The scope our study are male dominated organizations. We define them as those where the minority are women. In addition, the male dominated organizations operate in industries, which are considered to be masculine.

We decided to use the terms leader, manager and executive as synonyms in our paper. Even though it may be argued that these concepts are not reflecting on the same roles in organizations, we hold the opinion that in this paper the differences are negligible. From our point of view one cannot be involved in managerial activities without being a leader and treating subordinates as her or his followers. Moreover, the four female executives who were evaluated by their male colleagues, are also appointed to be leaders.

Lastly, in this study, no difference in significance will be made between the words company, organization and firm. Again, we are aware that these concepts may not reflect on the same meaning. A company or firm almost always exists for business purposes, most importantly for profit reasons, whereas an organization does not necessarily have to. However, in our opinion, every company or firm has a form of organization.

1.5 Disposition

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|------------------|---|
| Chapter 2 | Presents an understanding of the obstacles found in literature, which women must overcome throughout their careers, also known as the Leadership Labyrinth. Further, it explains the factors which can contribute to the navigation through this labyrinth. |
| Chapter 3 | Clarifies the research methods this thesis has used to gain an insight in the existing perspective towards female leadership. |
| Chapter 4 | Gives brief descriptions of the four organizations which participated in this study and the results of eleven interviews conducted with their employees. |
| Chapter 5 | Presents the analysis of primary and secondary research data combined. It also concludes and discusses the overall findings of this thesis. Furthermore, it discusses the limitations of this study, and the proposals for future research implications. |

2 Frame of reference

This part of the thesis helped us to build a theoretical basis for further empirical research. We focused on the areas which led us to the research questions of this thesis. Therefore, we started with the description of the Glass Ceiling Turned Labyrinth – to provide a greater understanding of obstacles, which women must overcome throughout their careers. Because even when evidence exists that a woman is successful in male gender-typed work, she still faces career-hindering problems in her work setting, for example problems of being simply disliked (Heilman & Okimoto, 2007). Furthermore, we elaborated on how women could navigate through the labyrinth, which results in the discussion about gender diversity.

2.1 The Glass Ceiling Turned Labyrinth

As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, there is still a long way for women to go in order to be equally represented in leadership positions and these barriers preventing women from entering leadership positions were related to the so called “Glass Ceiling”. Eagly and Carli (2007b) argue for a better concept for what confronts women in their career paths. They agree that the leadership labyrinth is a better metaphor than the glass ceiling for what women confront in their leadership pursuits. It is described as a journey with challenges for women all along the way to the top of leadership that can and has been successfully navigated by women. Hoyt (2010) revolves the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions based on the leadership labyrinth around three types of explanations (Figure 2.1). The first set of causes is describing differences in women’s and men’s investments in human capital. The second category considers gender differences between both genders. And the third type of explanation aims at prejudice and discrimination against female leaders. We elaborate on what we consider to be the most important factors in each category.

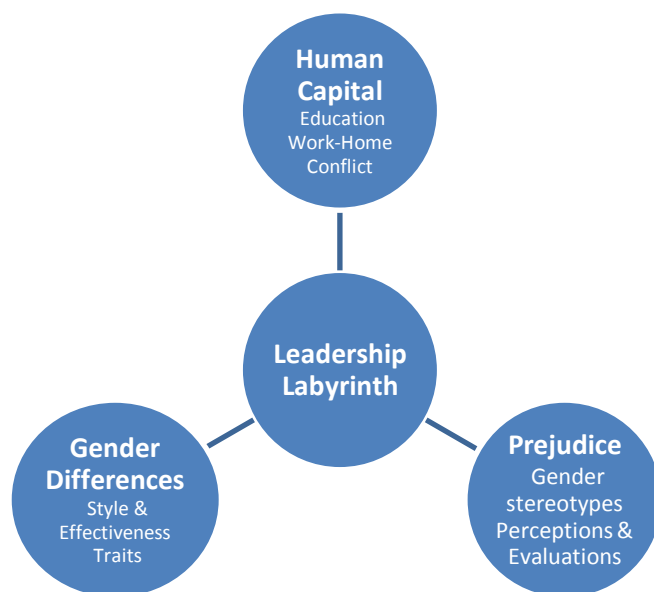


Figure 2.1 Leadership Labyrinth based on Hoyt (2010).

2.1.1. Human Capital Differences

Differences in education of women matters in the imbalance of male and female leaders. Hoyt (2010) states that women are obtaining undergraduate degrees at a far higher rate than men and that women are graduating at a rate higher or nearly equal to that of men in most professional schools. Nevertheless, there is clear evidence that the lack of women reaching the top is not due to the fact that women did not get equal education as men. The report by the European Commission (2011) on equality between men and women shows that more boys are leaving school, while bigger number of young women attain in higher education in almost all Member States. Yet, based on the above mentioned report, in their career women are more concentrated in often lower-paid sectors, for example education and healthcare. Although women are entering into leadership positions more frequently, they have fewer developmental opportunities at work than men have, which also can be considered as a type of education. Another activity which attributes to the evolution of a career is the building of relationships, which involves sharing of personal experiences within the network. If a woman does not get the opportunity to share them, she might face a barrier fitting into the organization. A possible reason for this fact, could be the lack of female mentors, which in return is leading back to prejudice against female leaders.

Another issue which contributes to the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions can be related to the work-home conflict. According to the report on Equality Between Women and Men in 2011 (European Commission, 2012), reconciling work, family and private life is still considered to be a challenge for many European women. The labor market participation of mothers according to it is 12.1 percentage points lower than that of women without children, while the rate of fathers is 8.7 percentage points higher than that for men without children. The domestic and child-care expectations result in another barrier for women to climb the leadership ladder, even more for those who cannot afford domestic help. According to Bowles and McGinn (2010) women respond differently to these work-home conflicts. Some women choose to become a “superwomen” and attempt to participate in every role available, others choose not to marry or have children. These explanations are also supported by Eagly and Carli (2007a), who state that the most fateful turns in the labyrinth are the ones taken under pressure of family responsibilities. They found that women continue to be the ones who interrupt their careers, take more days off and work more part-time. Therefore, women have fewer years of job experience and fewer hours of employment per year, which slows down their career progress with a result that they face more difficulties in reaching leadership positions. Recommendations to decrease this work-home conflict are based on increases in childcare services and father’s take-up of parental leave (European Commission, 2012).

2.1.2 Gender Difference

Other arguments trying to explain the leadership gender gap relate to the statement that women are just different from men. One argument in this category is that women are not equally represented as men in leadership positions refers to leadership style and effectiveness. Since women are not equally represented as men in corporate business, questions

arise whether women lead in a different way from men and whose leadership style is considered to be more effective.

2.1.2.1 Leadership style & effectiveness

Prior to providing an answer to this questions, one needs to determine the different leadership styles first. Most research on studying leadership style conducted before 1990 consists of a distinction between task-oriented style and interpersonal style. According to Eagly and Johnson (1990) the former style is based on organizing activities to perform assigned tasks. The latter style refers to the extent to which the manager engages in activities that tend to the morale and welfare of people. Eagly and Johnson (1990) also state in their meta-analysis about gender and leadership that people associate task-oriented qualities more often with men and interpersonally oriented qualities with women, yet that there is no difference in effectiveness.

Powell and Graves (2003) argue that leadership theories in recent years have become more dynamic by distinguishing between transformational, transactional and laissez-faire leadership. Transformational leadership pays attention to the charismatic and affective elements of leadership. As its name implies, this leadership style is a process on changing and transforming the subordinates. By using the transformational leadership style, followers are being motivated to transcend their self-interests for the good of the organization by setting high standards for performance and then developing subordinates to achieve these standards. According to Powell and Graves (2003), adopting the transformational leadership style will result in the transformation of followers into leaders, which according to Eagly (2007) contributes more effectively to the organization as a whole. In contrast, Powell and Graves (2003) state that leaders adopting the transactional leadership style focuses on clarifying the responsibilities of subordinates and then responding to how well subordinates execute their responsibilities. It has been proven by, among others Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt and van Engen (2003) that transformational leadership is more likely to be connected to female leaders, especially in providing support to subordinates. On the other hand, male leaders are more likely to adapt the transactional leadership style. Eagly and Carli (2003) found in a meta-analytic study that women were rated higher than men on most dimensions of transformational leadership. These findings also revealed that female transformational leaders were evaluated more positively on extra effort, satisfaction and effectiveness. Female transformational leaders especially obtained an advantage in evaluations rated by women.

2.1.2.2 Traits

How come women and men differ in leadership styles? According to Eagly (2007) women have to deal with the sometimes conflicting demands of their roles as women and their roles as leaders. This is where the second argument of the category style and effectiveness, traits, comes into discussion. Women are expected to show traits such as kindness, concern for others, warmth, and gentleness, whereas men are expected to be confident, aggressive, and self-directed. In addition, according to Powell, Butterfield and Parent (2002), leaders are expected to have more agentic than communal qualities, with the result that men are more accepted and perceived more natural in their leadership roles, which places women in

a disadvantaged position. For women to be perceived as effective according to Vinkenburg, van Engen, Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2011) they need to demonstrate sensitivity as well as strength, while male leaders only need to demonstrate strength. The route of promotion therefore exists of the blending of individualized consideration and inspirational motivation, communal and agentic aspects of leadership (Eagly & Carli, 2003).

Most recent research on male preferences towards masculine and feminine characteristics has been conducted by Stoker, Van der Velde and Lammers (2012). Their research shows that men dislike female leadership traits and prefer male leaders in organizations where female managers are rare. Nevertheless, Stoker et al., (2012) also turn this fact around: male employees start to appreciate feminine traits in leaders and female leaders when they are well represented. The authors argue for more and detailed research on the male perspective on female leaders.

Empirical research has shown small differences in leadership style related to effectiveness between men and women. Nevertheless, researchers argue for a difference in leadership style between men and women. Out of transformational and transactional leadership, the first one is considered to be the leadership style which has been perceived as most effective. This it is also more likely to be connected to female leaders. Women on managerial positions obtained an advantage when they are evaluated by the same gender. Yet, they do face disadvantages due to people's expectations about women and their roles as leaders, especially in masculine leader roles.

2.1.3 Prejudice

The last set of explanations of the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions focuses on prejudice and discrimination against female leaders. According to Hoyt (2010), stereotyping includes cognitive shortcuts that influence the way people process information regarding groups and group members. It has been argued by Eagly and Sczesny (2009) that in leadership roles, especially when they are male-dominated, women generally do not seem as "natural" or appropriate as men do because their roles are associated to be masculine. Hoyt and Chemers (2008) argue that people hold on to the assumption that women take care and men take charge. As leaders, women should be masculine and tough, but as women, they should not be "too manly". Eagly (2007) states that often female leaders must manage within organizational cultures that tend to be masculinized, and believe that they must adapt their leadership style accordingly. Moreover, she says that female leaders are often bound by these perceptions that constrain them to their gender roles and influence their leadership styles and behaviors. Therefore she argues for a fundamental change in organizational cultures, which should lead to the celebration of women's strengths of a gender-equitable work environment.

Another research conducted by Eagly (2007), shows that leader roles which are highly dominated or culturally masculine in their demands present particular challenges to women because of their incompatibility with people's expectations about women. This incompatibility restricts not only their access to these leadership roles, but also has influence on their effectiveness. In the above mentioned research it was argued that when these leader roles

are extremely masculine, people may believe that women are not qualified for them, and they even may resist a female leader's authority. Women are still portrayed as suffering disadvantage in access to leadership positions as well as prejudice and resistance when they occupy these roles. Timberlake (2005) relates this disadvantage to the lack of toughness and competitiveness needed to succeed. Furthermore, the author states that it is difficult for women in highly masculine domains to build helpful relationships and to gain acceptance in influential networks.

Moreover, not only the decision makers are influenced by the stereotypes existing on female leaders, it also contributes to a homosocial reproduction: people prefer to deal with persons similar to them (Kanter, 1977). This puts women in a disadvantaged position when a male leader is looking for replacement. Moreover, this also has a negative influence on the way women see themselves. Hoyt (2010) states that women who are present in a small minority of a male-dominated group are seen as tokens representing all women. Lastly, women are often burdened with the assumptions of others that they have come to where they are in the organization, because of special relationships with those in power. In particular this applies to attractive women, which can have negative effects on the way in which a their success in an organizational setting is interpreted. A woman's success at attaining important managerial positions in the organization is therefore not likely to be attributed to her work competence (Heilman, 2001).

To conclude, empirical research reveals that gender stereotypes influences the perception and evaluation of female leaders significantly and directly affects women in or on their way to leadership roles.

2.2 Navigating the Labyrinth

In this section the factors that can contribute to the removal of the barriers and / or hinders women face in their leadership role are being discussed. These factors relate to: gender diversity, organizational culture and decision making.

There are a number of important motivations for removing the barriers in the field of leadership. First of all, it will fulfill the promise of equal opportunity for women and men by offering everyone the possibility to take on leadership roles. Secondly, it allows the human resource department to increase the pool of candidates with greater variety. And lastly, by promoting a diverse group of women into leadership roles, businesses, societal institutions, and governments will become more representative (Hoyt, 2010). Besides becoming more presentable, diversity is associated with greater group productivity (Forsyth, 2010). Among other, it has been proven by Catalyst (2004) that financial success increases, with the increase of the number of women in leadership roles. Moreover, Heilman (2001) argues that it may be possible to make the workplace a more comfortable place for career-oriented women by understanding how others in the work setting react to women and by identifying the organizational practices and procedures that encourage biased evaluation. Eagly and Carli (2007b) argue that passing through the leadership labyrinth requires persistence, awareness of one's progress, and a careful analysis of what lies ahead.

2.2.1 Decision making

As stated in the report on equality between women and men by the European Union (European Commission, 2012) the equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes and positions is a prerequisite for the advancement of women and the achievement of substantive gender equality. It has been recognized as a necessary basis for effective democracy and good governance in all fields. Although the European Union admits that progress has been made, the underrepresentation of women (Figure 2.2) continues to be an area worth paying attention to in many of the EU Member States.

Additionally, according to Klenke (2003), a top management team is a highly visible embodiment of the organizations, because its strategic direction, values and credibility. She advocates for adding more women to this group. She claims that this will enhance the equality of women in leadership roles, whereas also more female mentors will be on site, which will further stimulate other women (for reasons mentioned above) to strengthen their career.

Nevertheless, Heilman (2001) showed in her study that as women ascended the corporate hierarchy, their likelihood of being promoted become much poorer than that of their male counterparts.

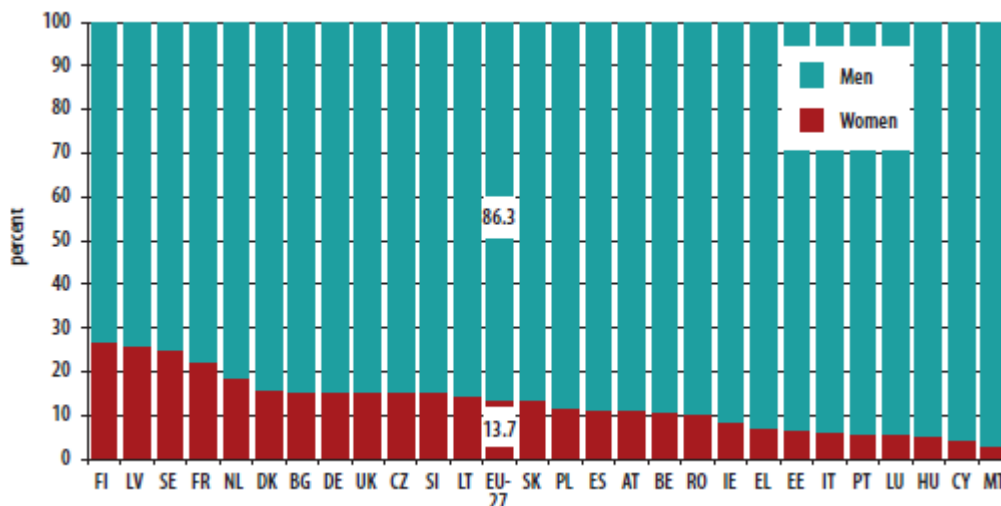


Figure 2.2 Members of boards of largest publicly quoted companies. Source: European Commission database, 2012.

2.2.2 Gender diversity

As stated before, women and men in general characterize different managerial features and styles of leadership. Companies are in need of a balance between both of them and therefore should be interested in improving their performance through gender differentiation. In fact Woolley, Chabris and Pentland (2010) in their article present a positive correlation between the gender diversity and firms' efficiency, innovation and financial outcomes.

A study conducted by Nilssen and Ruenzi's (2007) shows that for example female fund managers perform equally to men. Nevertheless women show more stable and long-term outcomes, while men tend to have either good or bad financial results. This situation is also associated with higher profits from a men's side and that is why the authors do not seem to support employment of women in this particular branch, according to the strategy of financial portfolio. Though, it has been proved that it is beneficial to a company to dispose variety of income sources, both short-term as long-term, which are associated with higher risk and return, and long-term with lower risk and return (Appelbaum, Audet, & Miller, 2003).

The importance of gender diversity and its benefit for an organization becomes apparent in a very clear and concise way through the concept of Gender Dividend by Pellegrino, D'Amato, and Welsberg (2011). The authors do not only focus on the microeconomic perspective, but also present the macroeconomic view: global growth can be achieved through full integration of women into work- and marketplace. In order to stimulate this, the investment in female employees, leaders and consumers must be made. This should result in an increase in sales, enhance markets and improve the recruitment process and keep crucial talents. The changes in the society towards inclusion of women should be profound and dramatic in order to seize fully the Gender Dividend.

Nevertheless, the concept is quite novel and so far not widely known. The only other source of information is provided in a book by Pagés and Piras (2010). They state that women are the major force which can for example heal the economy of Latin America. Their arguments are the following: women have made important impact into all sectors, they are better educated than men and female employment keeps rising, despite market swings. Also their contributions to home budgets are rising, which in turn leads to investment in children's education and well-being, which means development of future generations. Despite the fact that this particular research focuses on the situation in America, we argue that it can be applied to some extent to the global economy as well.

2.2.3 The Organizational Context

Women's capacity for leadership does not only depend on their individual development of goals and identities, but also on the organizational context within which opportunities for leadership arise (Ely & Rhode, 2010).

Despite the many barriers that block the acknowledgement of a female leader's success, there are also situations when it just cannot be ignored. When it comes to the success of female leaders in organizations, Heilmann (2001) states that even when a woman has been performing very well, she may not be viewed as competent and her success will be ascribed to other factors. She argues that it has to be recognized and appreciated within the organization, because of her ability and skills. In this part, the way in which the company itself can contribute to the removal of the barriers women face are being discussed.

Organizations should alter norms and practices to better support female leaders. As for every single organization, a unique culture and way of operating exists. For all individuals working in an organization, it is of great importance to know and understand these rules. As stated by Sanchez-Hucles and Sanchez (2007) it is clear that successful female leaders must know and conform to the rules of the organization as well, regarding less the fact that this is not necessarily a simple and straightforward task. Understanding these rules will make it easier for women to modify their style, in such a way that setting goals can still be accomplished by using a preferred leadership style. Powell and Graves (2003) distinguished three types of diversity cultures: monolithic organizations, plural organizations and multicultural organizations. The latter organizational culture does more than only promoting diversity: a culture of inclusion is also being promoted. The goal is to create a culture in which every single employee feels comfortable and appreciated and is given a chance to make meaningful contributions. For these reasons, Powell and Graves (2003) argues that multicultural organizations are most favorite for women to work in.

In addition to stimulating diversity in organizations, Rink and Ellemers (2009) advise organizations to invest in formal diversity training programs. When an organizational culture values diversity and stresses the importance of equality for women, individuals within the organization will be more likely to adapt to this culture. Therefore, diversity trainings are focused on changing one individual's attitude toward diversity.

As stated before, women are a majority of college and master's degree graduates and therefore represent an equal share of the talent available for leadership. Reducing the obstacles to women's success will also lead to the reducing of the costs of attrition. Organizations will benefit from this, since it increases employees' morale, commitment, and retention and decreases the expenses associated with recruiting, training and mentoring replacements, which in return will further develop the competitive and multicultural organization (Ely & Rhode, 2010).

2.3 Research questions

The research questions for this study, which derive from the frame of reference, are as follows:

- Which perceptions do men have, when working with a female leader in a male dominated organization?
- What barriers do female leaders face in male dominated organization?
- How can women overcome barriers in order to become leaders in male dominated organizations?

3 Methodology

In the previous sections the perspective on female leaders within the literature was presented. To meet the purpose of the thesis, in the following chapter we explain and rationalize choices for a qualitative research design, through semi-structured interviews and the abductive approach. Furthermore, we describe the process of gathering data and the multi-case study analysis. At the end the limitations of this study are presented.

3.1 Research method

The data to be obtained in order to fulfill the purpose of this study depends on one's personal view, that is why qualitative research was considered to be the best choice. According to Burns and Grove (2009) this type of research is a systematic, subjective approach to describe life experiences and give those experiences meaning. Furthermore, Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) state, that qualitative research is based on data collection techniques that generate or use non-numerical data. That is exactly why quantitative research was not conducted, as this type of research would generate or use numerical data, which is not appropriate to fulfill the purpose of this study about male perceptions about female leaders.

The thesis focuses on two variables, which are female leadership from a male perspective. These variables can have an established relationship and since the emphasis of this study is to define the correlation between them, an explanatory research was considered to be most applicable to fulfill the purpose (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009). Furthermore, the purpose of this thesis is to identify the relationship between the male perspective on female leadership and the barriers which arise from this perspective and how to overcome them. That is why other types of study, which are exploratory and descriptive were excluded.

According to Eisenhardt (1989) building theory in case studies is most appropriate in early stages of studies or when freshness in an already widely researched area is necessary. Abundant literature about female leadership is available, that is why we want to obtain a novel view focusing on the male perspective on this area, which is at the same time a rather omitted part of the theory on female leadership, as mentioned before within the frame of reference. We support the above mentioned view, therefore a multiple case study approach was chosen for this thesis. Taking into account that frequently one can study only a limited number of cases within a multiple case study, Eisenhardt (1989) states that cases can be chosen from extreme or polar types. We assumed, that the hardest industries for women to attain leadership positions and achieve equality are male dominated ones. Barriers and obstacles, which can be found in companies, where the majority of employees are men, should be also most radical compared to female dominated and gender-mixed. For this reason, research has been conducted in organizations where the majority of employees are men.

In order not to get overwhelmed with the obtained data in cross-case analysis, which can frequently occur in the studies without focus (Eisenhardt, 1989) we took two preventive measures. Firstly, the research questions mentioned at the end of the previous chapter were taken into account, and secondly the number of companies to be examined resulted into

four. Reaffirmation of this strategy can be found in Eisenhardt's above mentioned article as he considers it a good one. Moreover, Eisenhardt states that there is no ideal number of cases for a multiple case study, yet four to ten is considered to be proper. This point of view is supported by Stake (2006), who claims that less than four do not show sufficient interactivity between cases while the researchers will be not able to understand it in more than ten cases.

Selection of appropriate population controls extraneous variation and helps to define the limits for generalizing the findings.

3.1.1 Abductive approach

To gain a better understanding of the research questions we used abductive approach. This kind of study not only allows the researcher not to be restricted to inductivist and deductivist projections from past probabilities, moreover it allows to apply and develop novel reasoning methods (Patokorpi & Ahvenainen, 2009). That is why our beginning point of pre-understanding the topic is the frame of references, then we present the findings from our empirical study. In the analytical part of this thesis the literature is combined with empirical data, allowing us to come up with the new insights about the male view on female leaders. Furthermore, the abductive approach allows us to present recommendations for future research in order to increase our contributions to literature.

The abductive approach allowed us also to develop the most probable causes of obtained information from primary and secondary data and to resort sense-making (Patokorpi & Ahvenainen, 2009) of up-to-date situation of women on the labor market.

Since we are not making assumptions from the data obtained, the deductive approach will not be used. Whereas, we did not state any hypothesis and either test hypothesis, the deductive approach was not applicable to our study (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009).

3.1.2 Time horizon

Another aspect which has to be taken into account when planning a research concerns the time horizon. Cross-sectional study was chosen, which is according to Saunders et al. (2009) a research based on a particular phenomenon at a particular time. All the interviews were conducted within a month (see: Table 3.1). Whereas, a relatively short time for gathering the empirical data excluded longitudinal study, which is rather used to examine trends in long periods of time.

3.2 Data collection

Most of the existing theory about female leadership is presented from an American point of view, that is why we decided to conduct a study, which would give us an insight into European managers' situation, as there has not been that much focus on it yet. Moreover, we have the widest access to European markets, through connections and geographical closeness. That is why we decided to approach the organizations in which we could conduct our research in Germany, Poland, The Netherlands and Sweden (see: 3.2.1 The process of

gathering data). The convenience sample was chosen, despite being considered overused by researchers (Berg, 2001). We argue that it is not decreasing the value of our research, because we evaluated an appropriate fit for our study, as suggested by Berg (2001). The author highlighted the easiness of access and low cost of the convenience sample. In addition the use of it was beneficial for us, because of a rather short time to conduct the research and lack of high funds

According to Saunders et al.(2009), in order to gather valid and reliable data which is relevant to the research questions related to the purpose of this research, the use of semi-structured interviews is most appropriate. Saunders et al. (2009) categorize interviews into 3 major groups: structured interviews, semi-structured interviews and unstructured or in depth interviews. Semi-structured interviews are considered to be the most favorable for this thesis, since there will be a list of topics and questions which will be covered during the interviews. The order of the questions can also vary depending on the flow of the conversation. In order to evaluate the situation of female leaders in Europe, we chose to set semi-structured interviews with three Polish companies and one Dutch organizations, to which the authors had access. In order to gain a holistic view from several positions within firms, we chose to acquire the perspective on a female leader within one organization of a superior of the female leader, a peer of the female leader and one of her male subordinates. Our expectation was that the perception on the same female leader could differ, accordingly to the relation with the interviewees. This strategy has been chosen, to obtain a general perspective of the male perspective towards their female leader.

3.2.1 The process of gathering data

Potential partners for cooperation were approached in Germany, Poland, The Netherlands and Sweden. There were several problems in finding them, whilst applying the above mentioned requirements. Firstly, in several male dominated companies there simply were no female managers. Frequently, if there were some women in the organization, they were holding lower positions. Secondly, it has also occurred that the first contact persons within an organization were female, who did not want to be assessed by their coworkers, and that is why it was difficult to get in contact with potential interviewees. Thirdly, qualitative research requires more effort and time from respondents. Since quite a few potential interviewees mentioned to be too busy, they could not afford to take part in our study. Fourthly, several persons were not willing to communicate through Skype, since some of them just do not like video calls or do not have the software needed and would have to get in contact with someone who does. Lastly, some companies did not want to share any information, which is why in the Figure 3.1 a quite high percentage is marked with “no data”. The list of all contacted companies can be found in Appendix 1.

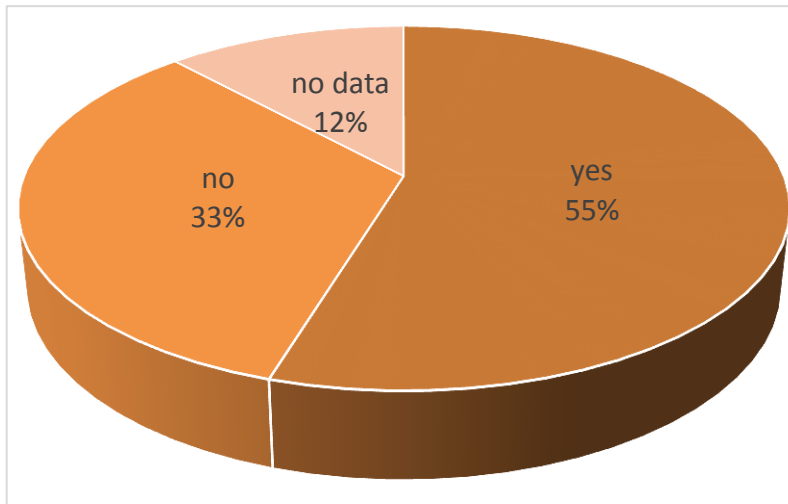


Figure 3.1 Information about female managers in contacted companies

3.2.2 Interview questions

Several set of questions were prepared for all the interviewees to cover the same aspects in each conversation (Daymon & Holloway, 2010). Those questions remained open-ended in order for respondents to feel natural during the interview. The main questions were supported by follow-up questions to better engage all the interviewees, as the above mentioned authors suggest.

Four main research areas were chosen, namely general perceptions of men on collaborating with a female leader, their expectations towards their female manager, relationships among employees in the organization and prejudices, both towards the women as towards men and women in the organization in general.

In the area of **perceptions** we were mainly interested in the general view of an interviewee on the female manager. That is why the questions address her leadership style, the benefits for the company emerging from employing her, weaknesses and strong sides of the person and how the men feel about the collaboration. By starting the interviews with these questions, we were able to create an understanding between the interviewer and the interviewee and formed the basis for the following, more detailed areas.

The next area addresses the **expectations** of interviewees towards the female leader. We tried to find out if they had any requirements towards the woman before they started to work with her. Except when the answer was negative, we wanted to know, if the expectations turned out to be fulfilled and how. In addition, one question mentioned experienced surprises, both negative as positive, which revealed the corporation between the respondent and the female manager. Furthermore, the interviewees were asked about gender preferences, in order to give an insight into the difference between the general male expectation on collaboration with a female manager and the reality of working with one.

Moreover, we focused on existing **relationships** within the company. A main issue of importance was primarily the fit of the female manager within the company, therefore we wanted to know if she was alienated in the organization or rather a part of the team. Then

we asked the interviewees to discuss her relationships: the one with the interviewee himself, with the rest of the employees and in the end – specifically the relationship with her team in order to make it possible to argue whether her leadership style tends to be transactional or transformational. To conclude, this area made it possible to understand how the female manager was coping in a male environment.

The last section of interview questions addressed **prejudices**. Whereas, we were curious if there was any bias, either positive or negative, towards the female manager, which could be expressed by the interviewee. Moreover, the issue has been addressed whether the female leader treat her male and female coworker the same or differently. These set of questions allowed us to assess general gender equality of the organizations.

An ending question closing the interview allowed the interviewees to bring up issues that have not been addressed before. Moreover, it gave the respondent the possibility to share additional thoughts, which the interviewee considered to be significant. The questions were created in English, thereafter translated into Polish and Dutch. The latter two languages were used while conducting the interviews, which allowed the respondents to feel more comfortable and allowed them to express their opinions and feelings in a more appropriate way. All versions of the interview templates can be found in the tables in Appendix 2.

In total 11 interviews have been conducted. Table 3.1 shows with whom and in which organizations men were interviewed, which positions they hold and how long the interviews were. For confidentiality reasons, respondents of Kuehne+Nagel Sp. z o.o. specifically asked not to reveal their names in this study. Therefore, in the following sections, they are mentioned as Respondent 1, Respondent 2 and Respondent 3. Whereas we did not contact three out of four female leaders, who were described by the interviewees, we do not state their names either and we use the name Female Manager.

Table 3.1 Data about conducted interviews

| | Organization | Interviewee | Position | Interview |
|---|-------------------------|---|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1 | FEROCO S.A. | Jan Gribko | Chief of Engineering Works | 07.05.2013 19 min; telephone |
| 2 | | Adam Michalski | Contract Manager | 28.04.2013 35 min; Skype |
| 3 | | Piotr Stachowiak | Construction Site Engineer | 23.04.2013 22 min; Skype |
| | | Female manager Urszula Czwojdrak-Konieczna | Construction Site Manager | |
| 4 | Kuehne+Nagel Sp. z o.o. | Respondent 1 | Seafreight manager | 14.05.2013 27 min; telephone |
| 5 | | Respondent 2 | Import manager | 10.05.2013 30 min; Skype |
| 6 | | Respondent 3 | Key clients specialist | 14.05.2013 20 min; Skype |

| | | | | |
|----|-------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| | | Female Manager | Export manager | |
| 7 | Mandersloot Sp. z o.o. | Maciej Horbaczewski | Vice-Head of Office | 14.05.2013 20 min; Skype |
| 8 | | Przemysław Isalski | Head of Operational Unit | 13.05.2013 38 min, Skype |
| 9 | | Bartosz Majewski | Customer Service Specialist | 14.05.2013 42 min; Skype |
| | | Female Manager | Head of Customer Service | |
| 10 | Police Unit North Netherlands | Oscar Dros | Head of Police Unit North Netherlands | 16.05.2013 33 min; telephone |
| 11 | | Gerard van Hoeven | Process Owner Enforcement | 16.05.2013 31 min; telephone |
| | | Female Manager | Head of Operations | |

The interviews were conducted via Skype, which is a mixed form of conducting interviews face-to-face and by telephone. In a situation, in which obtaining data is sensitive, the ability to see the respondent and being able to receive information based on the mimics and gestures of the interviewees is considered to be an advantage. Therefore, we consider Skype to be a more effective means than phone, since we were able to see the respondent. Moreover, all the organizations we interviewed are located outside Sweden and taking into account the fact that we were not able to travel to Poland and The Netherlands to conduct the interviews face-to-face, we consider Skype to be the most favorable means for gathering data. Nevertheless, due to circumstances, four out of eleven interviews were conducted by telephone.

3.3 Data analysis

According to (Stake, 2006) the multiple case analysis is very complex and therefore extremely difficult to analyze if done by more than one person. That is why we decided to choose summarizing (condensation) of meanings as the type of qualitative analysis process (Sauders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009). It allowed us to grasp the main outcomes of the interviews conducted by the second person and therefore it was possible to analyze the findings together. Each of the conversations was recorded, then translated and transcribed. Further, we summarized the most important findings, which emerged from the interviews. Those are presented in the following chapter (Empirical Data).

Case study research is surrounded by the myth that the process of creating theory from this type of research is limited to the researchers' perceptions. However, Eisenhardt (1989) argues that one of its strengths is the likelihood of leading to creation of novel theory. He justifies it with its possible disclosure of juxtaposition of conflicting realities. For this reason, the abductive approach was chosen to analyze our multiple case study.

Due to the lack of fit between our study, the processes of categorization (grouping) and structuring (ordering) of meanings using narrative (Sauders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009) were excluded from the analysis.

3.4 Quality of the research

As the research of our thesis is characterized as qualitative, the acquisition of qualitative data was necessary. The type of empirical data which was chosen for the current study is primary and was collected through semi-structured interviews. The evaluation of this evidence is important in order to assess the entire study. In addition, the evaluation of data collection techniques is necessary. Moreover, we are aware of the limitations of our study, which are presented in the next section.

Based on the theory, we identified two important factors which contribute to the evaluation of qualitative studies. These two main factors are: validity and reliability. According to Kvale (1996) validity refers to the truth and correctness of a statement and reliability is related to the consistency of the research findings.

The factor of validity is supported by the fact that we offered our interviewees at the beginning of each interview to remain anonymous. Whereas they were given the opportunity of expressing their feelings and opinions anonymously, the truth and correctness of statements were supported. In addition, the creation of the interview template was based on concepts which were identified within the frame of reference. Before analyzing the conducted interviews, all of them were transcribed, which increases the correctness and accurateness of the statements.

The factor of reliability in our thesis is supported by the inclusion of the interview template at the end of this thesis (see: Appendix 2). Moreover, the provision of a table with the names of the interviewees and the names of the companies in which they worked is a factor which makes the outcome of this study more reliable. In addition, the fact that all the interviews were recorded increases the level of credibility of our study. Lastly, the fact that at least two employees from each organization were interviewed in order to obtain a more holistic view of each organization contributes as well to a more reliable outcome.

Worth to add it that part of the outcomes of our study showed the same results from both primary and secondary data. Leonard-Barton (1988), who stated that her findings were more valid and generalizable when others obtained the same results in different contexts. By following this statement we use this fact to prove the credibility of our study.

3.5 Limitations

The first limitation of the current thesis is that we only examine the male perspective towards female leaders within industries that are dominated by men. The presented cases are extreme, which means that the findings are less generalizable than if we would have researched polar ones. In addition, the fact that the interviews were conducted within a small number of companies in two countries, may have led to less accurate and transmittable results.

Secondly four of the interviews were conducted through telephone, therefore we were not able to see the respondents. We were not able to take into account important things like mimics and gestures of these four interviewees and a closer connection was harder to achieve. Because of those obstacles the perceptions retrieved from the conversations might be less valuable than from the additional seven interviews.

A third limitation relates to the fact that the interviews were conducted by women with men, which could have resulted in the respondents not being completely honest. This might have caused significant bias of the data.

Whereas the original interviews had to be translated into English, it could be possible that part of the meaning of what the interviewees were trying to explain might have gotten lost.

Lastly, a possible limitation is caused by the complexity of the multiple case study. It is extremely hard to transmit one's perception of an issue, that is why despite sharing transcriptions from the interviews, part of the observations could have been missed throughout the analysis done by two persons.

4 Empirical Data

In the following chapter we present the outcome of throughout the study obtained primary data. The interviews were conducted with employees of three Polish companies and one Dutch organization. In the sections below there is a short information about these four followed by summaries of outcomes of interviews with respondents from each of them in the order: superior, peer on the same position and subordinate. The data served as a basis for further analysis.

4.1 FEROCO S.A.

FEROCO S.A. is a company established 65 year ago in Poland. In the first years, the organization was engaged in reconstruction of post war destruction of railway infrastructure. Nowadays, the company can be found in the transport infrastructure engineering sector, in which FEROCO S.A. is one of the biggest player in Poland. FEROCO S.A. offers customers high quality construction and assemblies services, which are guaranteed by meeting the international standards. Main areas of the company's involvement are: railway stations and lines, bridges, overbridges, roads and motorways.

Superior – Jan Gribko, Chief of Engineering Works, mentioned to be working with Urszula Czwojdrak-Konieczna for more than 25 years, which makes his relationship with her more intense than with the other employees, yet he emphasized that he does not treat her differently than he treats men, nor does Urszula treat men and women differently. He characterized the female leader as a very competent person, well-mannered, very friendly, yet she used to treat people almost like a mother in the past, when times were different. Jan Gribko explained that she has never fired anyone and that she had to sympathize with different situations, which are now not tolerated any longer. He mentioned that colleagues like to work with her, they do not face problem with her as being their superior and learn a lot throughout the whole process:

“If there are conferences or meetings with other experts from the branch, and due to circumstances she cannot be there, then people ask for her, why she did not come. She is very well known and respected amongst the engineers of bridges. Also people like to meet her, so there is no exclusion or alienation out of the sphere or circle of experts: she is inside.”

In addition, Jan Gribko stated that it does not matter at all to him, whether he works with a female manager or a male manager. He emphasized his preference for working with a person with right competences, skills, attitude towards work, vocational preparation, regardless the gender. Moreover, he pointed out that according to him, success does not relate to the gender of a person. Nevertheless, he acknowledged that the sensitivity to employees, which the female leader holds, is considered to be an important benefit for the organization. Jan Gribko mentioned that Urszula Czwojdrak-Konieczna has never brought personal problems to her work; they have never been transmitted to the professional surrounding. Moreover, he explained to be positively surprised about working with the female manager, because of the fact that the female manager has dealt perfectly with major changes in the construction sector. He acknowledged that it is easier to work with Urszula or with other

persons who have gained more years of experience in the industry, than those who are younger and still need to learn a lot. Before making a decision, Jan Gribko stated that Urszula prepares a long time, with a lot of details, in order to give concrete tasks:

“She is very calculated; not to say this or this, but it should be like this and this. If she has doubts though, she is even discussing these issues with the employees. Then when the decision is made, it must be as she says, without any alternatives, because that does not make sense. She is very competent.”

Peer in (more or less) the same position – Adam Michalski, Contract Manager at FEROCO S.A., explained not to perceive Urszula’s leadership style different than that of himself. Before starting to work with Urszula, Adam stated not to have any expectations, rather he sees working with women as a norm. Furthermore, he stated that he did not notice any weaknesses of the female manager.

“Urszula is a very calm person; I have never seen her angry. Her peacefulness is also transmitted to the construction sector. I think that there are also men, who conduct construction in this way as well, this also applies to other branches. There are also managers, who are more exuberant and flamboyant, who are more capable to show their emotions. But I think Urszula is a very balanced person.”

Adam also mentioned that he thinks that Urszula has obtained her leadership position through her knowledge, competences and experience, which has contributed to gaining respect from employees in all levels. Nevertheless, he mentioned the company really being male dominated and that the top management’s attitude towards women is negative, which can be felt. However, Adam emphasized that Urszula is an exception, because she is accepted by top management for her great competences and because she is hardworking. He also emphasized that there is a difference in his relationship to her and to other male employees, which, according to him only is due to the fact that she is older than him. According to Adam, Urszula focuses very much on the development of employees, and that she pays attention to giving advices to people. He stated that she is not only focusing on outcomes, but she also cares about people. Moreover, he mentioned that he does not think that Urszula has preferences for working with men or women, but she does try to take more care about the women who are also working in the construction sector. He explained that she does that, because of the fact that she knows how hard the profession can be and that she understands that it requires sacrifices. Yet, he explained that this was not related to preference, rather to female solidarity. At the end of the interview Adam stated that he would not advice any woman to work in the construction branch:

“It is a very hard work, most of the time you are far away from home. Many men experience difficulties in management positions in the construction sector. I also had problems of my own, because it is a very stressful job: you are responsible for data, execution, finances, etc. It makes many men not wanting to do it. Flexibility is required, in constant delegation, that is why it would be better for women to do something else, something more peaceful. It is doable, based on Urszula’s example, but this includes many factors: it must be the right person, ready for sacrifices like spending time with your family. It is more likely to be a job for a woman, who does not have a family.”

Subordinate – Piotr Stachowiak stressed from the beginning that he does not differentiate whether his leader is a woman or a man: for him it does not have any meaning or consequence at all. He mentioned that the female style of having conversations and negotiations is more gentle, whereas among men it is rougher. In the case of Urszula he stated that it is a big plus that she is able to put everything in the right words, not to offend anyone and at the same time she gets what she wants. Moreover, he mentioned that the company benefits from employing Urszula as a person: she is very successful, which does not come from the fact that she is a woman, but because of the fact that she has worked in the branch for many years. Piotr mentioned that his female leader has a warmer heart for people than male leaders, which sometimes can be seen as not that good, since the situation requires a harder performance. Weaknesses of female manager are not related to gender, according to Piotr. Moreover, he emphasized that he likes working with her and that it is in general nicer than working with a man:

“This can be related to the fact that she is a woman. Female managers are rather uncommon in our industry, so it is pleasant to work with a woman. Instead of having a very strict male conversation, it is just nicer to talk with Urszula. For me, it is more pleasant to work with her than with some other male manager in a similar position.”

He also explained that he did not have any expectations about working with a woman, for him expectations are related to someone’s concrete position, experience, support, etc. Moreover, he argued that he could not imagine the company without Urszula. Additionally, Piotr mentioned that there have been situations in which he came to the conclusion that sometimes it is better for those specific cases that Urszula gets in contact with a company. Her style of leading conversations has always been leading to positive results. At the end of the interview, Piotr mentioned that the problem of having a female leader does not exist in his perception.

“For me, I do not see the problem if a leader is a woman or a man. I have never even considered it, as for me it does not matter. What counts is knowledge and experience: the gender has no influence at all. There are small differences between a female’s leadership style and a male’s leadership style, like the way of leading conversations, but I would not like to relate this to gender, rather to individual personality. I cannot see the negative side of working with a female manager.”

4.2 Kuehne+Nagel Sp. z o.o.

Kuehne+Nagel is one of the world’s leading logistic providers. The company was founded in 1890 in Bremen, Germany by August Kuehne and Friedrich Nagel. Since 1992 the organization is operating in Poland and employing almost 1800 experts. Their activities are grouped by the types of transport: seafreight, airfreight, contract logistics & integrated logistics and road & rail logistics. The company provides services to many industries, including very demanding ones, like pharmaceutical and high tech.

Superior – Respondent 1 from Kuehne+Nagel presented the view, that Female Manager’s leadership style is clear and understandable for the persons, who are supposed to execute the tasks. Moreover, he mentioned that her style is also more human; because she treats her

subordinates more like partners, but also keeps discipline within the team. Respondent 1 argued that this is mostly caused by the fact, that she is a woman, but also because of her personality. Furthermore, he mentioned that the female leader is more accurate than men in the organization which results in many benefits for the company, leading to a positive and fast way of solving cases. Respondent 1 emphasized that the female leader has a strong character, which is supported by the following quote:

“She is not afraid of challenges and she is never letting go in hard cases. What differs her positively from men is that she has the ability to distance herself from her job and does not bring her job back home, which increases her effectiveness. I feel very good with working with Female Manager, because I know that she executes her tasks.”

Moreover, he stated that she does not try to avoid responsibility, listens to him and understands him, which makes the cooperation with her better and easier than with men. He also claimed that this is not linked to her gender, as women are not always like her. Respondent 1 explained that the only expectations he had, were to bring in knowledge and experience to advance the firm, and that is exactly what happened. He acknowledged not to prefer to work with a male manager, because of the Female Manager’s positive attitude towards work, people, situations and cases. Furthermore, Respondent 1 mentioned that she is able to make men focus on their work during meetings and brought gender diversity to the company. He said that the relations between her and other managers are sometimes embittered, depending on the fact if they have the same objectives, which he speculated also to be connected to gender. Furthermore, he emphasized that the shippers in her team come to Female Leader for her advice in situation where decisions need to be made. Respondent 1 argued that the relations within the group are very good. There are no prejudices towards the female manager according to him. Both from his side and the others’, she is treated in the same way as male colleagues, which is also the case in her mixed team: Respondent 1 stated that gender has never mattered. Nevertheless, he argued that there should be more women working in logistic companies.

Peer in the same position – Respondent 2 has been working for a long time with Female Manager in the company. He claimed, that she is a masculine woman, which also applies for the other women in the organization. In his opinion her character is authoritative and she would not allow anyone to push her around. Thanks to her being an executive, staff meetings are less tense. Respondent 2 emphasized the following:

“I think there should be gender diversity within every company. Women bring in freshness and different perspectives. When I am working with her, I am talking to her as a colleague, not thinking about her sex. Gender does not make any difference for me. What did surprise me was the fact that she treats her subordinates better than the rest of the employees. She has more understanding towards them, then for example towards me.”

Respondent 2 explained that the weakness of Female Manager is that she is swearing a lot and that her strong sides are knowledge, honesty and straightforwardness. He expects from Female Manager to do her job well and heading towards the same direction, despite personal opinion, which is according to him is the case. In addition, a very positive thing he

mentioned was also that she is diplomatic during hard meetings. It does not matter for him if he works with a woman or a man, what did matter is professionalism, which can lack in cooperation with both genders. Respondent 2 expressed the thought, that Female manager does fit the company, but speculated also that it must have been harder for her, breaking through a male environment, as the logistic sector is a brutal world. In his opinion a manager in those industries should be firm and be able to scream sometimes. He also said that his relationship with Female Manager is very similar to the ones with males: positive and correct. As he said, if she wants to play the game, he will treat her properly, they meet at equal conditions with equal expectations towards each other. He added that the relationships of other men in the company with her are more or less alike his. Respondent 2 mentioned that Female Manager cares slightly more about development of employees, then about the results obtained. Female Manager is assessed in the company in the same way as men, as there are targets for everyone, which have to be met. Respondent explained that she is gentler for women, but without any bias towards men, it is just the matter of words choice. He claimed that the Female Manager is adapting to her current surroundings in a manlier with way men, more womanly with women. Nevertheless, he emphasized that one cannot say who she prefers, as she is treating everyone in the company, regarding less the positions, in the same way. Respondent 2 stated, that Female Manager has always been dominating and this just developed with her time in the company.

Subordinate – Respondent 3 at the beginning of the interview explained that he had never been working under a male manager before, that is why he was not able to make comparisons. He mentioned that Female Manager has been working at Kuehne+Nagel for 12 years now, so she obtained significant knowledge concerning the job and she is for like an open book which he likes to read. He stated that she has been appointed as a manager just a few months ago that is why she is still learning how to be a good executive and pursues this goal constantly. Respondent 3 expected experience and knowledge from Female Manager, which he said she obtains and uses. Her strength, accordingly to Respondent 3 relate to communicating in English and the ability to conduct a conversation, especially with clients. He argued as well, that she is very helpful and does not interfere in her subordinates' work in a negative way. He did not consider gender to be an issue, which is supported by the following quote:

"Whether a manager is good or not, does not depend on gender. He or she is supposed to appreciate the worker, monitor and evaluate the subordinates, be honest and treat people equally. Moreover, a leader should fight for team member and work on their development."

Before Female Leader was promoted to her current position, Respondent 3 and Female Leader had been colleagues for two years, so they knew each other and did not have any special expectations. Moreover, he explained that it was positive that she did not distance herself from people right after becoming a manager. He mentioned that she knows how to balance the relation. He would not prefer to work with male superior as men can have more conflicts with each other, women are more understanding for the workers. In general it does not matter for him though if the leader is male or female as long as it is a right person on a right position, as it is the case for Female Manager. According to Respondent 3,

she fits well the company, she knows how to deal with men, she has her opinion and she has a strong personality. Furthermore he mentioned that she will not allow anyone to push her around. He explained that their relationship is the same as with other male managers, as their conversations look the same and they are on partner level, the only difference is the vocabulary, as she is a woman. He stated that when there is a problem in the team, they sit together and discuss it, Female Manager, because of her experience, knows solve the problems. In addition, he mentioned that the focus between employees' development and results are balanced and that the evaluation of Female Leader is not affected by her gender and that there is no prejudice neither towards her in the whole company, nor from her side towards coworkers. There is a small differences in women's conversations though.

4.3 Mandersloot Sp. z o.o.

Mandersloot is a Dutch company founded in 1964, operating on a few European markets. Their clients are both international concerns as well as small companies involved on foreign markets. The company's activities are transportation, mainly products which require a particular temperature, warehousing and logistics. Their mission is to provide a service for high and repeatable quality according to customers' and law requirements concerning the safety of goods, supported by modern communication and navigation systems.

Superior – Maciej Horbaczewski is the superior of Female Manager within Mandersloot. He claimed that there is no specific leadership style which she adapts. He mentioned that she leads her followers in a bad way, because she does not know how to seize their potential and deal with their work time. Nevertheless, he emphasized that this is not related to her being a woman, but rather out of female solidarity. Nevertheless, Maciej stated seeing benefits in employing her, which is supported by the following quote:

"If there is a problem with clients or suppliers, it is always better if the woman communicates and makes the phone call, in order to manage the problem. That is exactly why she is a perfect in her position. Her strength is also to deal with the men in the organization. Women are needed in leadership positions in this sector as for instance in Customer Service or Administration Units positions, although they should not be employed as Head of Logistics."

Maciej said that he and Female Manager started to work in the company at more or less the same time, so he had no special expectations towards her, besides executing what she is supposed to and doing it in a more scrupulous way than men. He explained not wanting to work with men on her position, in his opinion men will never deal with certain situations like women. Maciej stressed that it is easier to execute specific positions for a men, as there is a need sometimes to swear or shout to get things done. He argued that Female Manager is not alienated from the male group in the organization and fits perfect within the company, on her position. Moreover, he added that the relationship between him and Female Manager is similar to his relationship with men, yet different from his relation with other women within the organization. Maciej related this to the fact that they are very much alike, they understand each other, even without words. From his point of view the relationship of Female Manager with her subordinates is very positive. However, he stated that she is scared of making decisions. He mentioned that she had a problem with firing an incompe-

tent person, whereas a good manager must know how to do that. Maciej stated that in Female Manager's team the results are slightly more important, as she is assessed based on them. Furthermore, argued that he uses nicer words when talking with Female Manager, without swearing, still getting straight to the point, as it is a matter of good education and respect towards a woman, not a sign of any prejudice. He mentioned that her assessed performance is given in a slightly differently way, because of her being a woman, though work is most important and everyone has their own responsibilities.

Peer in the same managerial position – Przemysław Isalski is working closely with Female Manager, as their units complement each other. He claimed that she is on a perfect position, as a head of customer service department and she would fit equally good in his position. He mentioned that her job was created especially for her and the whole division was created out of operational one. Furthermore, he stated that she is beneficial for the company as people like to talk with women in his opinion, not in the sexist way, but because she is a competent person. Przemysław also claimed that diversification and seizing of female features are good for organizations. In addition, he mentioned that Female Manager is very good in illustrating issues, explaining mistakes of operation unit to customers and she knows how to deal with stress. He emphasized that in those kind of situations a man would swear, she just leaves for a moment, although there were situations when she had to shout and swear as well, and then all the men listened to her. In his opinion one of the best things is that she is able to cooperate with his unit without involving the boss. He feels good working with her. When Female manager was on a maternity leave, a man came to cover for her, he just could not fit in, everyone was happy to have her back after a year, he claimed. That is also why he would not want to work with a man on her position. The expectations of Przemysław towards a whole new unit, which were all met, was to take away a part of the responsibilities of the operational unit, to cut them out of frequently angry clients and focus on more important for them issue. According to Przemysław, Female Manager fits within the male environment and is a part of the team. He stated that when talking with Female Manager, men uses different words. He added that it is not because of the distance between them, but it is caused by the respect towards a woman. Przemysław emphasized the following:

“She is appreciated for her competence. Moreover, all the employees know that she is always willing to help. There are diverse relations within our team, but Female Manager is respected by all the employees, mainly because she gives clear orders and everyone can execute their tasks with freedom within a framework given by her. Her focus tends to be more result oriented, as there is not that much space for creative solutions.”

There is no special treatment from Przemysław's side towards Female Manager, he assesses her based on her competences and he sees her as a manager in a very positive way. He mentioned that it is hard for him to state if this is related to the type of person or her being a woman. Female Manager in his opinion treats everyone in the same way, but he emphasized that conversations with female colleagues are different, since they can talk about more diverse topics and she knows when not to cross the border when dealing with men.

Subordinate - Bartosz Majewski is a subordinate of Female Manager since a few years. He mentioned to see her as being primarily more emotional than men, at the beginning she

was trying to emphasize with everyone, even unreliable customers, but with time she became tougher. He stated that the human factor for Female Manager is very important, but she is never unprofessional. Bartosz explained that she has a friendly attitude towards all the people she works with and that she always keeps good relations with customers, what is beneficial for the company. According to Bartosz Female Manager's strengths and weaknesses are the following:

"Her weakness is that her private life affects her work. It is felt by the coworkers, when she has problems outside of the company, for instance at home. This is annoying. Her big plus is that she respects the rules and is very accurate. I do not mind working at all with a woman: the relationship between us is very friendly and the fact that she is my supervisor is hardly being felt. She only interferes when needed."

Moreover, Bartosz mentioned that it is good for him to have other superior monitoring him though, otherwise he becomes lazy, he would not want to work with a man as it is easier to influence a woman, when needed. Nevertheless, he explained that he can always count on Female Manager. The relationships in the company are very close, that is why we are all very good together and also all the four women fit into the male environment and learned how to tolerate the male sense of humor. Bartosz argued that there is only a difference in the way of talking with women. He stated that all the men use different vocabulary and they are less straightforward towards women, as what men say can be taken personally. According to Bartosz she never gives orders, rather asks nicely if something is possible to execute and decision making depends on the level and importance of a problem. In addition, he explained that Female Manager always makes sure that people learn, as the company employs many young persons. She wants her subordinates to be versatile. Bartosz mentioned that the feedback they get from her is gentler than the male one, the content is the same, but the words differ. He acknowledged to have more understanding and patience for her lacks in technical knowledge, than he has for men, which is also related to Female Manager being a woman. Moreover, he mentioned that she treats women in the company in a less rude way than men, does not scream to them, which is not seen negatively by people according to him, as sometimes there is a need to be impolite to men in the organization. As Female Manager has become a leader in quite a short time and she is learning how to be a good one, there is still understanding towards her, in Bartosz's opinion. Previously she did not work in the logistic sector, that is why she is still gaining knowledge connected to the area and she is very willing to improve.

4.4 Regional Police Unit North Netherlands

From January 1, 2013 the organization of the Dutch police has been transformed into the National Police. These are national corps consisting of ten regional forces, which are referred to as regional units. All regional units are designed as unambiguous as possible, therefore every single regional unit is being led by one police chief. The regional police unit North Netherlands includes the provinces Groningen, Friesland and Drenthe and is being led by police chief Oscar Dros. The appointed female manager in the organization is the Head of Operations and also his deputy, and therefore a female leader in this organization.

Superior – Oscar Dros explained that he has been working with the Female manager since 2002 and that he has experienced the collaboration between the two of them as extremely pleasant, which he does not relate to the fact that the manager is being a woman. Furthermore, he described her leadership style as result orientated, rational and analytical, which he also considers to be applicable to his own leadership style. Nevertheless, Oscar mentioned that the female leader is a very feminine woman. Although, he noted that Female manager sometimes expresses the feeling of lacking courage, which Oscar described as a masculine trait, these insecurities can also be found by men. Other than that, Oscar mentioned not to see many differences between his leadership style and that of the female manager, nor in the relationship towards other employees. The police chief stated that she is attentive and always has an eye for the relationship that connect persons. Furthermore, he stated that diversity within an organization makes a team stronger and therefore he also appreciates female traits. Oscar explained that diversity has been a main area of focus within the police in the Netherlands over the last couple of years. Oscar also agreed on the importance of recognizing strengths and weaknesses of the female leader, which will attribute to the strengthening of the team as a whole. However, in his opinion, the female leader does not really have weaknesses, and if she had some, Oscar mentioned they would not be related to the fact that she is a woman. Moreover, the police chef emphasized the fact of having three female district chiefs in his team, who hold managerial positions as well. He does not relate to them being women, but because they are good at what they are doing. There has been no doubt in appointing them to these positions, because he knew they were suitable for the job. In his opinion, it might as well could be men who would have been assigned to these positions. He also acknowledged that the female leader is being evaluated based on her performance, not because she is a woman. She has been an example to other females, by showing the possibility to rise to the top within a relatively short period of time. Oscar did mention that, every now and then, he needs to remind Female manager of paying attention to keep the balance between work and family, yet he acknowledged those reminders need to be given to male colleagues as well.

Subordinate – Gerard van Hoeven has been working at the police for more than 30 years and is currently the Process Owner of Enforcement. He stated that the he needs to report on a weekly basis to Female manager. The leadership style of his female leader has been described by Gerard as involving, result orientated and empathic. Gerard also acknowledged these definitions not being specifically feminine. Nevertheless, he mentioned that the female leader in his opinion, sometimes can come across as a little too directing, yet he acknowledged that this also has to do with his own perceptions and preferences. Furthermore, he described Female manager as open and vigorous, and always searching for the connection with people. Moreover, he states that the relationships between him and his superiors are both result orientated as based on personal development. The feedback he receives, is in addition to being described as open and clear, also considered to be careful and nuanced. Gerard claims to feel comfortable with the discussion of his personal development, which according to him contributes to improvements. Other than difficulties in translating decisions from top management into practice, which Gerard acknowledges to be common in every organization, he did not come across any problems with his female

leader. Moreover, he stated that she really fits in well into the police. He argued that the women working at the police have been assigned because they are competent, not because they are women. Furthermore, he argued that diversity within a team for him is of great importance and he does not have preferences for a female or a male leader and that competences are most important. In addition, Gerard emphasized that with greater diversity within a team, the issues would be addressed from different of points of view, which will lead to a variety of possible solutions. For these reasons, he is in favor of police departments as varied as possible.

5 Analysis

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze and combine the findings from the empirical part with what has been said in theory. The scope of this analysis is to identify the male perceptions about female leaders in male dominated organizations, identify possible barriers and suggest ways to overcome them.

5.1 Male perceptions towards female leaders

In this section the perceptions that men have, when working with a female leader in a male dominated organization are presented. A combination of what is stated in the theory and the outcome of the interviews will be analyzed.

In the literature part we mentioned that Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt and van Engen (2003) argued, amongst others, that transformational leadership is more likely to be connected to female leaders, especially in providing support to subordinates. As from our findings from the empirical part, the female leaders were perceived not to have a specific transformational or transactional leadership style. Nevertheless, when it comes to the way female managers treated their subordinates, in two cases the interviewees mentioned a different approach towards the team members, which we interpret as more transformational.

Powell, Butterfield and Parent (2002) mentioned that women are expected to show traits such as kindness, concern for others, warmth, and gentleness, whereas men are expected to be confident, aggressive, and self-directed. That is why men are more likely to be accepted and perceived more natural in their role as a leader. After implementing eleven interviews in four different organizations, we can say that in all of them the female leaders are being perceived as the right persons in the right positions. According to the literature provided by Vinkenburg, van Engen, Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2011) women need to demonstrate sensitivity as well as strength in their leadership role. This has also been confirmed in the empirical part. One female leader was especially appreciated for her balance in toughness and sensitivity towards employees. The majority of the interviewees mentioned this point, which was considered to be an important benefit for the organization.

An additional interesting point which was not referred to within theory, is the finding that female leaders are especially being appreciated for their communication skills both towards other employees within the company as well as towards customers. This could be considered as an advantage for women in leadership positions in male dominated organizations. Some male interviewees admitted to prefer working with a woman, because of the more pleasant way of communicating between colleagues. Moreover, it was also stated, for instance by Przemyslaw Isalski, that the female manager is the perfect person to deal with in unpleasant situations with rude and angry clients. Regarding building relationships and gaining acceptance in influential network, it has been argued by Timberlake (2005) that women have disadvantages due to the lack of toughness and competitiveness. However, the feminine characteristics attract the respect of others. which is supported by the following quote by Jan Gribko:

“If there are conferences or meetings with other experts from the branch, and due to circumstances she cannot be there, then people ask for her, why she did not come. She is very well known and respected amongst the engineers of bridges. Also people like to meet her, so there is no exclusion or alienation out of the sphere or circle of experts: she is inside.”

This is a prove that the female characteristics can be an entry key for female leaders to join a network or a relationship in comparison to male leaders.

An additional interesting outcome is the relationship between the female managers and men within organizations. The majority of the interviewees observed a difference in the way of communicating. For instance, the language that is used by women tends to be more emotional than the one used by men, which is appreciated within the organization. This contributes to building closer and stronger relationships between colleagues.

Furthermore, it has been argued by Stoker, Van der Velde and Lammers (2012) that men prefer male leaders and dislike female leadership traits in organization where female leaders are rare. In the empirical part we came across some contradictions, since in some organizations the female leader was acting very masculine, in others there was a balance between feminine and masculine characteristics. Nevertheless, the leadership style of all four female leaders was rated as effective. Another additional interesting outcome concerns the providing of feedback: male employees argued that it did not matter whether the feedback comes from a woman or a man, however women provide feedback with gentler words, which is appreciated more.

We point out that the theory focuses more on characteristics in leadership which defines whether a leadership style is being perceived as masculine or feminine. From the other hand, one of the outcomes from the empirical part is that a female leader, in order to be appreciated and perceived as effective, needs to find a balance between “feminine” and “masculine” traits. However, within a male dominated organization, men appreciate women not only for their balance between “feminine” and “masculine” traits but for their hardworking, skills and experience as well. This point has also been emphasized by the interviewees who acknowledge that their female leaders are able to behave accordingly to their gender and at the same time are able to act tougher.

Also Hoyt and Chemers (2008) mentioned that as leaders, women should be masculine and tough, but as a woman, they should not be “too manly”. This statement has been supported throughout the interview with Oscar Dros:

“Her leadership style is very result oriented, rational and analytical. She is a very feminine woman.”

In addition, we found out that the skills required in order to be successful in leadership positions, differ depending on the sector an organization operates in.

From our study the affirmation emerged of what was stated by Kwon and Meyersson Milgrom (2010) – men do gladly welcome women in male dominated organizations when they remain a minority. Due to the short time horizon issue, which limited us to observe if the tendency changes once there are more female employees coming. Another reason for

that is the fact, that the biggest percentage of women in researched organizations was observed in Mandersloot Sp. z o.o., where they represent 25% of workforce, which is still considered a small minority.

The most significant perception which has been identified within this current study can be defined as the appraisal of female leaders in male dominated organization, who are able to balance the “masculine” and “feminine” traits in combination with the obtained skills and experience.

5.2 Barriers from a male perspective

It has been argued in theory by, amongst others, the European Commission (2012) and Eagly and Carli (2007b) that the main barrier which women face is reconciling work, family and private life. These domestic and child-care expectations result in difficulties women face when climbing the leadership ladder. Furthermore, Bowles and McGinn (2010) mentioned that women cope in two possible ways with this barrier: either women choose to become a “superwoman” and attempt to participate in both domestic as leadership roles as much as possible, whereas others choose not to marry or have children. Throughout the empirical data it has become clear that the home-work conflict is still remaining to be a barrier for women in leadership positions. For instance, Adam Michalski, mentioned not to advise women to work, in the construction branch. In his opinion it is a very hard job even for men, frequently in bad conditions and far from home. Adam Michalski stated, that is not easy for him neither to sacrifice time he could be spending with the family instead of sharing a flat with a few coworkers five days a week. For those reasons he thinks that it would be better for women to choose different profession and if a woman wants to do it, it should be a right person, preferably without husband, not mentioning children.

An additional example given by Oscar Dros also confirms the difficulties in reconciling work, family and private life:

“Every now and then I need to remind Female Manager to pay attention to keep the balance between work and family.”

It is worth to add that, it has been mentioned within the theory by Timberlake (2005) that women have a disadvantage in their leadership positions, because of resistance and prejudice when they occupy leadership roles. They are believed to face assumptions that they might have gotten to where they are, not because of their skills, but because of special relationships with those who are in crucial leadership positions. Furthermore, in the theory it is stated by Heilmann (2001) that a woman may not be viewed as competent and her success will be ascribed to other factors, not to her abilities and skills. However, the outcome from the empirical part does not seem to support the theory in this matter. The four female leaders in all the cases, were described as successful, precisely because of their abilities and skills. An illustrative example by Adam Michalski comes from our empirical findings:

“The company is really male dominated and the attitude of top management towards women is negative, which can be felt. Urszula is an exception, because she has been accepted by the top management for her great competences and because she is hardworking.”

An additional barrier which is derived from the perceptions of men towards female leaders, relates to the difficulties women encounter in being accepted in influential networks and building relationships (Timberlake, 2005). But as it has been mentioned before, our empirical data does not support this, whereas for instance Jan Gribko mentioned that the female leader was “inside the circle”.

Women are also being put in a disadvantaged position because of homosocial reproduction. This means that when a male leader is looking for a successor, he is more likely to choose someone similar. Empirical data does not confirm nor reject this. Nevertheless, it has been argued by different interviewees that the female leaders have obtained their positions due to her abilities and skills. Furthermore, within the literature it has been argued that when leader roles are considered to be extremely masculine, people may have the expectation that women are not qualified for them, which results in the resistance of a female leader’s authority. This is not supported by our empirical data, since all four female leaders in the male dominated organizations were characterized as qualified for the positions. The bias in the empirical data only appeared when it came down to communication skills, in which women were said to possess advantages.

The last most significant barrier to be found within the literature has, according to Eagly (2007), to do with the conflicting demands of women’s roles as women and leaders at the same time. As described before, women are expected to show traits such as kindness, concern for others, etc. whereas men are expected to be confident. Empirical data has revealed that women in male dominated organizations need to have traits such as confidence, aggressiveness, and self-direction.

To sum up, the main barriers which female leader encounter in male dominated organizations are related to the work-home conflict, prejudice about female skills and the conflicting demands of roles of women.

5.3 Overcoming barriers

Rink and Ellemers (2009) stated that individuals are more likely to accept diversity, when an organizational culture values diversity and stresses the importance of equality for women. Therefore, they advise organizations to invest in formal diversity programs, which are focused on changing one’s individual attitude towards diversity. All of the cases in the interviews advocate for gender diversity, and it was mentioned by, among others, Przemysław Isalski, that it is nice to have women within the company, instead of working with only men. Moreover, Oscar Dros, explained that investing in gender diversity programs are truly beneficial for the organization. Hence, the investment of gender diversity within an organization is one possible way to cross the barriers and gives a chance to women to climb the organizational ladder. These gender diversity programs are focused on obtaining an understanding about the backgrounds, education and values of employees.

Besides changes in organizational cultures, women themselves can contribute to overcome barriers. The combination of outcomes from the literature and empirical parts, drives to the balance of not only having feminine and masculine leadership traits, but to the presence

of skills, knowledge and experience as well. In our opinion, this balance plays an important role in the professional development of women in managerial positions within the organization, in order to be perceived as effective, regardless in which industry.

In order to build a relationship, trust is necessary. However cultural differences and socio-historical perspectives influence our willingness to trust. The choice for trust depends on a decision based upon identifiable factors. Hunt, Laroche, Blake-Beard, Chin, Arroyave and Scully (2009), therefore advise to treat cultural differences – and the conflicts and tensions that arise from them – as opportunities to receive a more accurate understanding of one-self, others, and the situation. This will result in the building of trust and relationships will grow stronger. Although this topic did not emerge from our empirical part that specifically, we do argue that women should be open and exchange experiences, which in return will give them insights of themselves, others, and the situation.

After identifying the barriers within the previous section, the possible ways to overcome them, as derived from our study, are:

- investment of organizations in gender diversity programs;
- balancing feminine and masculine traits in combination with skills knowledge and experience;
- building relationship, based on trust, with male colleagues in order to gain beneficial feedback.

In our opinion, these three main suggestions can be a driver for women within male dominated companies to navigate through the labyrinth, which is discussed within literature.

6 Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to analyze the male perspective on women in leadership roles. The research questions served as a guidance to meet the above mentioned purpose of this current thesis. We executed a frame of references in order to identify different perspectives about female leadership and its concepts. Thereafter, four male dominated organizations were examined and interviews have been conducted with superiors, peers and subordinates of women in managerial positions. The analysis presented the perceptions of men in male dominated industries about female leaders in their companies and identified barriers and possible ways to overcome them. This thesis has added value to abundant previous work on female leadership, yet it has focused on the existing male perspective on it, which is quite novel approach.

When it comes to the male perceptions towards female leaders in male dominated environment the most significant findings relate to the leadership style. We can conclude from our interviews that the overall leadership style of the female leaders in those organizations is not being perceived as specifically transformational nor as transactional. Yet it has been argued that their leadership style tends to be more transformational in relation to subordinates, especially to female ones. However this fact is not being perceived, by the respondents as any kind of gender prejudice. When weighing the evidence, it appears more likely that female leaders not only are being appreciated for finding a balance between “femine” and “masculine” traits, moreover female leaders are appreciated for their knowledge and experience, which they have gained by working in male dominated organizations.

The most significant barrier found within the theory of this study is related to the home-work conflict, which remains to be the most difficult barrier to overcome from a male perspective as well. We can conclude from our interviews within four male dominated organizations, that men acknowledge that women are forced to make sacrifices in order to be successful female leaders, like spending less time with their family. Taking into account that only male dominated companies have been investigated, which is an extreme sample, this barrier should even be more present in male industries than in other sectors. An additional significant barrier for female leaders to attain leadership positions mentioned within the theory was that women are believed to face assumptions that they have come to where they are, not because of their skills, but because of special relationships with those in power. Although it might be concluded that the relationship between the female leaders and their superiors were overall strong the female leaders were specifically appreciated for their obtained skills and experience.

Lastly, the most significant factor which can contribute to women overcoming barriers in their carrier to and as a leader is linked, in our opinion, to gender diversity. Investing in gender diversity programs is proved to be truly beneficial for an organization and can attribute to change an individual’s attitude towards gender equality. An additional suggestion is to build relationship that includes the factor of trust with male colleagues, which has the intention to gain helpful feedback.

6.1 Managerial contribution

The practical contribution of this current study is to provide women who are aiming at ascending the leadership ladder with an inside view of male perceptions. Moreover, the identification and description of barriers in combination with our suggestions to overcome them, can be helpful for women to enhance their career developments within a male dominated companies. Besides, for organizations who are willing to increase the diversity and stimulate the gender equality, the identification of barriers can be useful for responsible managers to take the right decisions. These decisions can contribute to the elimination of the identified barriers.

6.2 Future research

A bigger number of samples should be taken into account, when analyzing the male perspective towards female leader, since this study only addressed the perspective towards female leaders in four organizations. In addition, we advocate conduction of more interviews within organization in more European countries, which can also lead to a comparison between different kinds of national cultures.

Even though we precisely chose to conduct interviews with only men, we admit the possible value of interviewing the corresponding women on managerial positions as well. Taking into consideration the existing female leader's view will be beneficial for obtaining an overview of how they have succeeded in overcoming the barriers. This choice will contribute to confirm and / or update the outcomes of navigating the labyrinth.

Lastly, we strongly encourage women to corporate in future similar research, as it can help them to a better understanding of how they are being perceived, which in turn will enhance the number of women in leadership positions.

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Appendix I: List of contacted companies

| | Name | Female |
|-----------|--|------------|
| 1 | Aannemersbedrijf J. de Jong | no |
| 2 | AB Gjuteriteknik | yes |
| 3 | APC | yes |
| 4 | Bayer | yes |
| 5 | BIM Kemi Sweden | yes |
| 6 | Centrum Hydrauliki DOH | No |
| 7 | CompensusHydraulika | No |
| 8 | DalkiaPolska | ? |
| 9 | Damel | yes |
| 10 | EcoStyle | yes |
| 11 | Energetyka Ciepna Opolszczyzny | ? |
| 12 | Euroafrica Shipping Lines Cyprus | yes |
| 13 | Eurotech | no |
| 14 | Fabryka Taśm Transporterowych Wolbrom | yes |
| 15 | FEROCO | yes |
| 16 | FinjaBetong | yes |
| 17 | Firma Transportowa MTS Krzysztof Korzeniak | no |
| 18 | GemeenteWeststellingwerf | yes |
| 19 | GnosjöAutomatsvarvning | yes |
| 20 | GrupaCarboautomatyka | no |
| 21 | GrupaPowen-Wafapomp | ? |
| 22 | HipolitCegielski | yes |
| 23 | Hydromel | no |
| 24 | JB Besturingstechniek | no |
| 25 | KABE | Yes |
| 26 | JVC Kenwood | No |
| 27 | KompaniaPiwowarska | yes |
| 28 | Kuehne+Nagel | yes |
| 29 | Maersk | yes |
| 30 | Mandersloot | yes |
| 31 | Modecom | No |
| 32 | MyCom | No |
| 33 | OL-TRANS.pl | yes |
| 34 | PagwaPrzemysławGrabański | yes |
| 35 | Poznańskie Centrum Superkomputerowo-Sieciowe | No |
| 36 | Regiokorps Politie Noord Nederland | yes |
| 37 | Rosenthal | ? |
| 38 | Royal Smilde | ? |
| 39 | SchaafBeveiliging | yes |
| 40 | Solaris Bus & Coach | yes |
| 41 | STX Next | No |
| 42 | Terminal LogistycznyPromont | yes |
| 43 | Vemat | No |

Appendix 2: Questions for the interviews

In English

| Questions for the superior, male manager holding same position as female colleague, subordinate of female manager | | | | |
|---|--|---|--|--|
| Perceptions | What do you think about the female manager's leadership style? | In what way do you think that the company benefits from employing a female manager? | Are there any weaknesses /strong sides of female manager? | How do you feel / What do you think about working with a female manager? |
| Expectations | What expectations did you have before working with the female manager? | Did it turn out to be different? In what way? | Are you positively or negatively surprised about some aspects of the cooperation between you and the female manager? | Would you prefer to work with a male leader instead? Why? |
| Relationships | How do you think that the female manager fits within the company? Why? | Is your relationship with the female manager similar to the one with males? Why? Why not? | How does the relationship (including decision making) of female manager with other employees looks like from your perspective? | Are the relationships more focused on employees' development or on the results obtained? |
| Prejudices | Do you have the impression that you treat the female manager differently than male ones? In what ways? Why? Why not? | Does the fact, that the manager is female affect the way how her performance is assessed by you? How? Positively or negatively? | Does the female manager treat women and men differently in the organization according to your perception? In what way? | |
| End question | Is there anything else you would you like to add? | | | |

In Polish

| Pytania do przełożonego, mężczyzny-managera, na tej samej pozycji, co kobieta oraz podwładnego kobiety-manager. | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|---|
| Odczucia | Co Pan myśli o stylu przywódczym kobiety-manager? | W jaki sposób w Pańskiej opinii firma czerpie korzyści z zatrudniania kobiety-manager? | Czy kobieta-manager ma jakieś słabości albo mocne strony? | Jak się Pan czuje pracując/ Co Pan myśli o pracy z kobietą-manager? |
| Oczekiwania | Jakie oczekiwania miał Pan przed rozpoczęciem pracy z kobietą-manager? | Czy okazały się one słuszne? W jaki sposób? | Czy jest Pan pozytywnie lub negatywnie zaskoczony w jakich zakresach współpracy pomiędzy Panem a kobietą-manager? | Czy wolałby Pan pracować z mężczyzną-managerem? Dlaczego? |
| Relacje | Czy myśli Pan że kobieta-manager pasuje do firmy? Dlaczego? | Czy Pańska relacja z kobietą-managerem jest podobna do tej z mężczyznami? Dlaczego? Dlaczego nie? | Jak wygląda relacja (włączając podejmowanie decyzji) kobiety-manager z innymi pracownikami w firmie z Pańskiej perspektywy? | Czy relacje skupiają się bardziej na rozwoju pracowników, czy na otrzymywanych rezultatach? |
| Uprzedzenia | Czy ma Pan wrażenie, że traktuje Pan kobietę-manager w inny sposób, niż mężczyzn? W jaki sposób? Dlaczego? Dlaczego nie? | Czy fakt, że manager jest kobietą ma wpływ na sposób, w jaki jej praca jest oceniana przez Pana? Jaki? Pozytywny czy negatywny? | Czy w Pańskim odczuciu kobieta-manager traktuje w inny sposób kobiety i mężczyzn w organizacji? W jaki sposób? | |
| Pytanie końcowe | Czy jest coś, co chciałby Pan dodać? | | | |

In Dutch

| Vragen voor de meerdere, gelijke en ondergeschikte van de vrouwelijke manager | | | | |
|---|---|--|--|--|
| Percepties | Wat vindt u van de stijl van leidinggeven van de vrouwelijke leidinggevende? | Op wat voor manier denkt u dat uw bedrijf voordeel heeft van het aannemen van een vrouwelijke manager? | Wat zijn naar uw mening de sterke / zwakke kanten van de vrouwelijke manager? | Hoe ervaart u het werken met een vrouwelijke manager? |
| Verwachtingen | Wat waren uw verwachtingen van het werken met een vrouwelijke manager? | Bleken deze verwachtingen overeen te komen met de werkelijkheid? Zo ja, op wat voor manier? | Bent u positief of negatief verrast over sommige aspecten met betrekking tot de samenwerking tussen u en de vrouwelijke manager? Waarom? | Prefereert u samen te werken met een mannelijke manager in plaats van een vrouwelijke manager? Waarom? |
| Relaties | Hoe goed past de vrouwelijke manager naar uw mening binnen de organisatie? | Is uw relatie met de vrouwelijke manager gelijk aan de relatie met mannelijke managers? Waarom? Waarom niet? | Hoe ziet, naar uw mening de relatie van de vrouwelijke manager met andere collega's uit? | Zijn de relaties meer gericht op persoonlijke ontwikkeling of resultaten? |
| Vooroordelen | Heeft u de indruk dat u de vrouwelijke manager anders behandelt dan de mannelijke manager? Op wat voor manier? Waarom? Waarom niet? | Heeft het feit, dat de manager een vrouw is, invloed op de manier waarop haar prestaties worden beoordeeld? Op wat voor manier? Positief / negatief? | Behandelt de vrouwelijke manager mannen en vrouwen verschillend binnen de organisatie naar uw mening? Op wat voor manier? | |
| Laatste vraag | Is er tot slot nog iets wat u toe wilt voegen aan dit interview? | | | |