

Influence of Mentality Towards Gender on the Development of Romanian Women's Careers

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Keywords: *Women; Leadership; Survey; Higher Education*

Introduction

In many countries around the world, women's opportunity to build a career and to access management positions is strongly related to the society's mentality. Different studies show that women do not succeed in advancing to top management positions, although education and job experience do not differentiate them from men (Beeson and Valerio, 2012). Eurostat data (2017) shows that, although women represent almost half of the employees in the European Union (EU), only 35% of them are in management positions. Among the obstacles to advancement are: structural obstacles (like the role assigned by society), family responsibilities, institutional mind-sets (masculine corporate culture, lack of company equality policies etc.) and individual mind-sets (lack of role models for women) (Barsh and Yee, 2012; ILO, 2015).

Global studies show that women's presence in the labor market is increasingly significant for economic growth and business development (Kuhlmann et al., 2017). In this context, the authors identified the research problem as one of analysing the particularities of the Romanian young generation's mentality related to women's career opportunities. The originality of the research comes from the authors' idea to identify the perspective of Romanian students on the topic considering them the new generation of employees who could change the present situation. The findings of this study can fill the literature gap by bringing new information

on the topic considering the particular case of Romania, a developing country inside the European Union.

Objectives

The research objective is to analyse the mentality of the Romanian young population related to women's efforts on building a remarkable career by identifying the students' opinions regarding the chances of women's integration in the labor market and their access to leading positions.

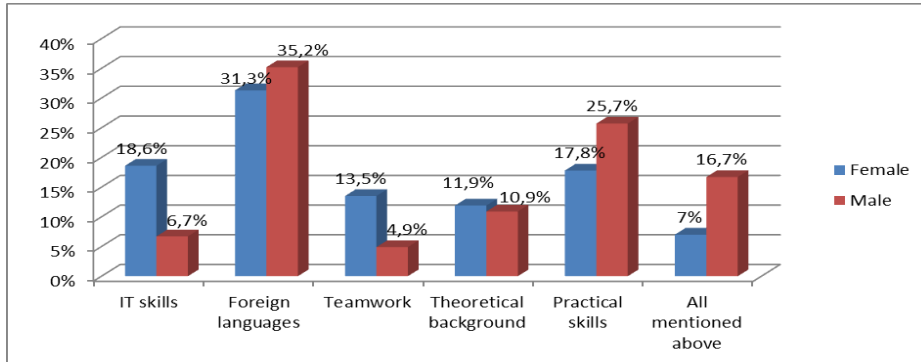
Methodology

To achieve the objective, the authors conducted a quantitative marketing research (a survey) involving a very large sample of 1122 students (aged 18-35) from 10 Romanian universities. The authors collected the data during December 2016 and January 2017 using an online questionnaire posted on Google Drive platform. The sample was built using multistage sampling based on 4 criteria: geographical area, university size, faculty profile and the study level. 55% of respondents are Bachelor's students, 35% - Master's students and 10% - PhD Students. The sample structure includes 68.5% females and 31.5% males. The data collected was analysed using the statistical software SPSS 17.

Results and Discussion

The most important variables analysed in this study are: the barriers faced by female students in applying for a job, the essential skills and competencies for being employed, women's chances of becoming leaders and the essential attributes for women to have in order to access management positions. The most important barrier for Romanian students in looking for a job is the *lack of professional experience*, followed by *the gap between theory (from academic courses) and practice*, mentioned by a third of respondents. An important barrier mentioned mostly by female students is *gender discrimination*. This fact confirms the fact that in Romania, as in the European area, young women still have more difficulties to be employed than young men (ILO, 2015).

The following figure shows the students' opinions on the skills considered essential in order to have a good job. The females consider that elements like teamwork skills, a strong theoretical background and IT skills help a person to have a good job, and these opinions are different from the male perspective.



Source: Authors

Figure 1. The most important skills for the integration on the labour market

In the last 10 years, at the European level many actions empowering women to a larger access at managing positions became more visible, in various fields previously reserved for men. This research shows that in Romania the hope that women can become leaders is very small. Therefore, according to Table 1, only 5.7% of the respondents give women a greater than 75% chance to become leaders.

Table 1: Opinions regarding the women's chances to become leaders

Women's chances to be leaders (%)	Males (%)	Females (%)	Total (%)
Less than 25	11.6	12.5	12.1
25 - 50	49.3	50.1	49.8
50 - 75	36.6	29.7	32.4
Over 75	2.5	7.7	5.7

Source: Authors' estimation

According to the study, the attributes considered a must for women to have a chance at a management career are: motivation and perseverance,

professional skills and gender equality inside the organisation. The following figure shows that a woman with the highest chance to become a leader must have a variety of skills and competences. A high percentage (28.3%) considers that the ability of teamwork is essential for a leader. Also, 13.2% consider it essential to know foreign languages, 11.3% consider that it is necessary to have a solid theoretical background. Equal percentages (7.5%) mention IT skills and practical skills.

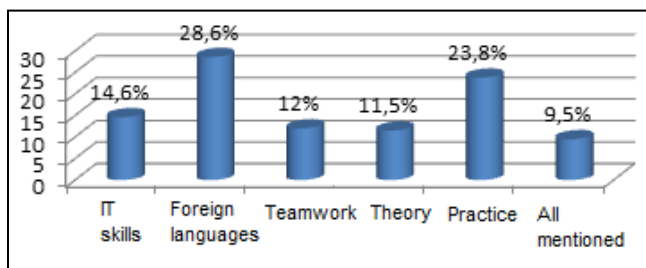


Figure 2: Skills of women considered for the future of the economy

Conclusion

The research results show that in Romania women face more barriers than men in finding a job and an important reason is gender discrimination. The women interested in building a career and achieving management positions face a difficult path, the main obstacle being the conservative and obsolete mentality of the society, even for the young generation. The small trust of young generation in women becoming leaders could be the result of the traditional education, where the woman is prepared for different roles in life compared to men. The research results show that in Romania are gender deep-rooted stereotypes that define women's and men's roles inside the community also for the young generation. For a future balanced Romanian society it is important that the individuals change their mentality. The first step can be done in the educational environment where teachers should explain the benefits of gender equality. The research results show the employers that an important part of young women still felt discriminated at job interviews. So, employers need to realize is the fact that gender is not an indicator of competence. The decision to recruit, train and promote young people (women and men), must be always based on criteria linked to skills and behavior. In conclusion, gender stereotypes should be forgotten,

corporate cultures should be shaped and really implemented and the lack of measures should be solved in order to give real chances to women to add value to the economy and society.

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